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Security Council

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Wednesday, 9 July 2008, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Le Luong Minh	(Viet Nam)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Belle
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Weisleder
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Mubarak
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Special report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1806 (2008) on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (S/2008/434)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

08-41630 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Special report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1806 (2008) on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (S/2008/434)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan and Turkey in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mr. Rangin Dâdfar Spantâ.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Shah Mehmood Qureshi.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Spantâ (Afghanistan) and Mr. Qureshi (Pakistan) took seats at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

It is so decided.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/434, which contains the special report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1806 (2008) on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

At this meeting, the Council will hear briefings by Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

I give the floor to Mr. Eide.

Mr. Eide: I am grateful for this opportunity to address the Security Council. Allow me to start by expressing my gratitude to all those around this table who have given me and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) such great support over these first three months. That has certainly been an encouragement and has given us strength. Since I have Foreign Minister Spantâ next to me, I would also like to express deep gratitude for the access that President Karzai, Mr. Spantâ himself and other ministers have given me during this period.

This is, of course, not a regular Security Council report and it is therefore limited in its scope, but it is an important report, concentrated on the outcome of the Paris Conference and the guidance that the Conference has provided, as requested by the Security Council in its resolution 1806 (2008).

Our work over the next 18 months will be guided by three components: the political calendar, the commitments undertaken in Paris and, of course, the evolving situation on the ground.

First, I would refer to the political calendar, and by that I mean in particular the election process that lies ahead of us. Today in Kabul, the Afghan

Independent Electoral Commission announced its decision on how to move forward. That decision will allow us to proceed with the voter registration process. It has been our view that the process must be conducted in a way that allows all Afghans equally to take part in the elections, while taking into account the difficulties we encounter with regard to security. The decision of the Commission creates a sound basis for the international community to provide the financial support that is required. UNAMA stands ready to support Afghan authorities throughout the election process, as requested by President Karzai.

The second component I mentioned that will guide our work is, of course, the commitments undertaken in Paris on 12 June. The Paris Conference was a great success. It was a success as a pledging conference, by raising more than $20 billion in support of our joint efforts in Afghanistan, and it was a success in political terms, by creating the basis for a strengthened partnership between the international community and Afghanistan. The Government of Afghanistan presented the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, which will be our common road map under Afghan leadership for the next five years, and the international community pledged to align its resources behind the Strategy.

The launching of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy comes at a very critical juncture. We need a clearer sense of direction and we need greater energy injected into our work. I am not at all inclined to trivialize the achievements of the past seven years; they are substantive, far-reaching and, in many cases, still underacknowledged. But what I face every day are questions relating precisely to the kind of commitments we undertook in Paris. Do we have a plan that can unite us? Does the international community spend its resources well enough? Is the Afghan Government sufficiently committed to addressing corruption and malpractice? I am convinced that if we do not live up to the commitments undertaken in Paris, we will jeopardize the support that we depend on — both from the Afghan people and in the public opinion of donor countries.

The Paris conference has created new momentum. We will now all have to look at our development plans to make sure that we respect the priorities of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. If we do not align our resources behind that document, then it is unimplementable. We must demonstrate an ability to adapt to changing circumstances. This is not the time to navigate by autopilot. The challenge for the United Nations will be to provide assistance to the Government in its efforts to implement its strategy and to ensure that the international community responds adequately.

An important part of the implementation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy will be to ensure that we respect its priorities. There are two important pillars, which will be decisive for the success of all other efforts. First of all, we need to undertake a massive institution-building effort. More solid, competent and accountable institutions are a precondition for security, for development and for enhancing the trust of the Afghan people in their own Government.

The second pillar is the expansion of key sectors of the economy. There is an urgent need to increase agricultural production and to invest in large-scale energy projects. In spite of the fact that more than 80 per cent of the Afghan population depends directly on agriculture for their livelihoods, only a very modest amount of money has been diverted to that sector of the economy. It has been neglected, and it cannot be neglected any longer. It is from the agriculture and energy sectors that real and sustainable growth in the economy can take place.

The Paris Declaration also includes a strong commitment to deliver aid more effectively. In Paris, donor countries demonstrated that there is now a greater readiness to ensure that more resources are spent inside Afghanistan, that more is channelled through Afghan budgets and that more attention is devoted to promoting Afghan procurement and capacity-building. That is an important development. It is also important to emphasize that the benefits of development must reach all provinces equitably. We cannot allow a situation where poor provinces that are poppy-free, secure and have better leadership are neglected in our development efforts. They must see that there is fairness in development, and we must inoculate those provinces against future instability.

Such improvements in the delivery of international assistance must be matched by determination on the Afghan side to improve the quality of its administration, show greater accountability and combat corruption. I am encouraged by the fact that President Karzai now convenes his key

ministers weekly to discuss the commitments that the Afghan Government undertook in Paris.

Resolution 1806 (2008) gives UNAMA the challenging task of improving the coordination of our common efforts. The most daunting part of that challenge will be to coordinate development activities. To me, it is important that the Paris Declaration very clearly stated that coordination must include all development assistance, which means whether it is delivered through development agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or Provincial Reconstruction Teams. There can be no exception to coordination of development assistance. Together with our Afghan partners, we are now setting up the structures required to improve our joint coordination efforts.

The third component guiding us is the evolving situation on the ground. There can be no doubt that we have underestimated the humanitarian challenges in Afghanistan. John Holmes will address that in greater detail. As late as in January of this year, a joint food appeal was launched by the Afghan Government and the World Food Programme. Yet another joint appeal was launched in Kabul today to meet an emerging food security crisis. The constant humanitarian challenges have revealed a clear lack of capacity to address the needs of the most vulnerable people. NGOs have criticized us, and rightly so. We must urgently strengthen our capacity to forecast, assess, coordinate and respond to humanitarian crises; and we should be imaginative in order to mobilize such resources quickly.

The situation on the ground is further complicated by an increasingly difficult security environment. We did expect an increase in insurgency activities over the past months. What we have seen is an unprecedented level of insurgent and terrorist activities, especially in the volatile provinces in the south and the east. But we have also seen a greater insurgency presence in other districts and provinces in the central parts of the country. The attack three days ago outside the Indian Embassy in Kabul demonstrated the ability of terrorists to carry out extremely deadly operations in the capital.

The situation on the ground demonstrates that there will be a need for a strong international military presence for the foreseeable future. There is also a need for better cooperation and understanding between the military and civilian components of our work. For UNAMA's part, we will engage in further discussion with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in order to enhance civilian-military cooperation. We will do so, and we will expand UNAMA's presence across the country in a way that ensures the integrity of, and understanding for, our independent mandate and in a way that can strengthen respect for humanitarian principles.

One particularly sensitive topic is the question of the protection of civilians, which is a core element of UNAMA's human rights and humanitarian agenda. The rising number of civilian casualties is a matter of grave concern to all of us. First and foremost, every effort must be made to reduce the number of civilian casualties to a minimum. I am in regular contact and dialogue with the Commander of ISAF concerning that and other topics. We are in agreement that we must develop ways to avoid confusion over the facts when civilian casualties are reported. However, when we talk about civilian casualties, we should be clear: the insurgents have continued to display a total disregard for civilian life, as was most tragically demonstrated by the targeted attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul three days ago.

I have also repeatedly stated that the solution to the conflict in Afghanistan will not be a purely military solution. It will fundamentally have to be a political solution. There is a need for a broadly based Afghan political dialogue that could reinforce national unity, add momentum to the nation-building exercise and promote prospects for peace. That dialogue will have to be defined by the Afghan Government itself and be conducted with respect for the Constitution as well as the relevant Security Council resolutions. But the political dimension of achieving stability now needs greater prominence.

Finally, there is a need to strengthen regional cooperation and dialogue on some of the critical issues facing the region, such as drugs, refugees and security. There is also great potential in other sectors, such as cooperation on energy, infrastructure and trade. That positive agenda must be exploited. UNAMA stands ready to be engaged whenever the countries of the region so desire and see a constructive role for us. I discussed those issues with the Foreign Ministers of both Pakistan and Afghanistan earlier today. During those discussions, I also underlined the need to pursue

the cross-border jirga process and a political dialogue that seeks to find solutions to common challenges.

In conclusion, the Secretary-General states in his report, the tasks facing UNAMA are very significant. I agree with his conclusion that those tasks can be addressed within the mandate specified in resolution 1806 (2008) and that there is no need for amendments or additions to that mandate. What we do need is resources — more and qualified personnel and financial resources to carry out our work on the ground. We are now slowly reducing the number of vacancies in the Mission, which is encouraging. But we will need to go significantly beyond the ceiling that we have today if we are to meet the challenges of the Paris meeting. We are at a critical juncture in Afghanistan. UNAMA will only be able to play its role if significant additional resources are provided.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Holmes.

Mr. Holmes: Thank you for this opportunity to address the Council. I was in Afghanistan for four days at the end of June to assess the humanitarian situation, given the growing concerns about the severity of humanitarian and protection of civilians issues. I visited Nangarhar and Kunar Provinces in the east, as well as Kabul, and held discussions with the Afghan Government at the national and provincial levels, and with United Nations representatives, international military force commanders, Member States and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and others from the humanitarian community. I also met with many Afghans who spoke compellingly about the problems they face in their daily lives.

It is clear that humanitarian needs are indeed serious and growing. I would single out four areas. First, food insecurity, fuelled primarily by drought and compounded by the dramatic rise in global food prices, is hurting Afghans badly and is a major concern to the Government and the humanitarian community. Wheat prices across the country rose by 58 per cent in 2007 and by another 30 to 50 per cent in the first four months of 2008. Afghanistan, a country with 42 per cent of its citizens living below the poverty line, is particularly vulnerable to rises in the price of the staple wheat flour.

The Government of Afghanistan and the humanitarian community responded quickly to deteriorating food security in January by issuing an initial appeal for $81 million. That has been almost fully funded and is enabling us to reach about 2.5 million people with immediate assistance. But it is far from enough. As Special Representative Kai Eide has just said, a second joint appeal for just over $400 million has therefore been launched today in Kabul, with a focus both on further immediate food, nutrition and health assistance and on agricultural inputs. Initial figures from pre-harvest assessments suggest that the food gap may grow from 500,000 tons of grain this year to 2 million tons next year — in other words one third of the country's annual requirement. I hope donors will respond quickly and generously to that appeal too.

Secondly, the plight of millions of returnees from neighbouring countries remains a major concern. Since 2002, 4.8 million Afghans — representing one sixth of the population — have returned home. Over 140,000 have returned so far this year. However, the country's capacity to absorb those returnees is limited, and there are still 2.3 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan and another 950,000 in Iran, plus economic migrants who are not registered. Lack of land and jobs, as well as insecurity, prevent many returnees from settling in their original communities. Resolution 1806 (2008) calls for enhanced international cooperation in ensuring voluntary and orderly return, and I hope we can see a specific effort in the region to respond to that.

In Nangarhar Province in the east, I visited Tangi 2, a temporary settlement of 369 families who had returned earlier this year from a camp in Pakistan that has now closed. Those families were living in makeshift shelters, with no agricultural land, limited access to basic services and very few livelihood opportunities. They were completely dependent on outside assistance, with water, for example, sent by truck every day. The United Nations agencies, particularly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the NGOs are doing their best, but the longer-term prospects for those people are uncertain, at best.

Meanwhile, many others are internally displaced. One estimated figure is 150,000, most of whom are in the south of the country. That includes long-term displaced affected by conflict, drought and lack of economic opportunities and others temporarily displaced by recent fighting. Many of the displaced are in areas that are hard to access owing to continued

fighting, making it virtually impossible to collect reliable data.

Thirdly, the conflict is placing increasing pressure on civilians. During the first five months of 2008, a total of 698 civilian deaths were reported by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), compared to 430 in the same period last year. The vast majority of those casualties were in the south. Of those 698 deaths, 422 were attributed to anti-Government elements, with 255 attributed to national and international pro-Government forces. Another 21 deaths were unattributable. The share of the casualties attributed to national and international pro-Government military forces has decreased from 2007 to 2008, and significant efforts are clearly being made to reduce those accidental deaths. However, since the fighting itself has intensified, the overall numbers of casualties caused by all parties to the conflict have also increased. The latest reports of civilian casualties caused by air and missile strikes last weekend can only add to the concern. I particularly regretted the news that three International Medical Corps staff members were killed and one, along with a number of villagers, severely injured in an airstrike in Nuristan that reportedly hit a bus last Friday.

Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, also highlighted during her own visit to Afghanistan in June the terrible consequences of the fighting for children, too often among the casualties, and now being recruited into anti-Government fighting forces in increasing numbers. Two hundred and twenty-eight schools were attacked with 75 deaths and 111 injured in 2007. In 2008, a further 83 schools have already been attacked.

I heard first-hand accounts from tribal elders of how all that has been affecting communities in Kunar and Nangarhar, trapped between the warring parties. They shared their frustration over civilian casualties, frequent house searches by national and international forces, based on what they often saw as poor intelligence and the lack of a clear mechanism for seeking redress where appropriate.

Fourthly, Afghanistan is highly prone to natural disasters, notably floods, earthquakes and droughts. Given the current vulnerability of its people, a major natural disaster could have disproportionately catastrophic effects. Meanwhile, we have struggled even to deal with events like the exceptionally harsh winter this year.

Faced with the increasing humanitarian needs, the humanitarian community is finding it progressively harder to respond because of insecurity and lack of access. The United Nations Department of Safety and Security has tracked more security incidents in May 2008 than at any time since the Taliban were expelled in 2001. As of late June, for example, there had been 137 serious attacks on humanitarian organizations, seven humanitarian workers killed and 88 staff abducted this year. The World Food Programme has already had 13 armed attacks against its convoys this year alone. Such attacks hurt only the poorest of the Afghan people and are unacceptable, whatever the political or military objectives of those concerned.

All humanitarian actors in Afghanistan expressed great concern to me about the blurred lines between military and humanitarian activities. Many Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are doing valuable work, such as constructing and repairing roads and bridges. However, when PRTs engage in what they themselves label "humanitarian assistance", that can increase the risks faced by civilian humanitarian personnel, who are working to provide humanitarian assistance in a needs-based and impartial way.

I believe strongly that PRTs should only provide relief as a last resort in cases where insecurity prevents civilian humanitarian actors from doing so. It is also preferable that donors, where possible, channel their humanitarian funds through mandated United Nations agencies and NGOs, not through PRTs, to create a more virtuous circle. United Nations agencies and NGOs have hitherto had insufficient security, funding and capacity on the ground to act in some areas, leaving serious gaps that the PRTs understandably have sought to fill.

I believe we must do much more to improve the humanitarian response. First, we need to support humanitarian actors in increasing significantly their capacity and in mobilizing additional resources for that purpose. We will work with all partners, notably the Government, to put in place a new humanitarian action plan to that end. We must also build further the Government's own capacity, particularly in disaster risk reduction and disaster management and in internally displaced persons and returnee management.

Secondly, we must do more to improve the protection of civilians. It may seem there is little we can do about the actions of the anti-Government elements, who show little or no regard for civilians and contempt for international humanitarian law and the principles of distinction and proportionality, as the latest bloody attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul showed. Nevertheless, any influence that can be brought to bear would help. The anti-Government groups must not be allowed to believe that they can kill civilians with impunity. In any case, I believe the United Nations, international forces and the Afghan Government need to work together in a renewed effort to reduce the impact of the conflict on civilians. There should certainly be scope for reducing further accidental civilian casualties and other problems resulting from the actions of pro-Government military forces and for making their actions more transparent and capable of being accounted for. Civilians need to know clearly where to go for redress. I would also urge a further effort to ensure that international military presences are located as far away as possible from civilian-populated areas.

Thirdly, we need to find ways to distinguish better between military and political activities, on the one hand, and humanitarian action, on the other. No matter how difficult, it is important to find opportunities to expand humanitarian space, increase access and reduce the likelihood of attacks on humanitarian actors. This approach could include a range of options from days or zones of tranquillity, in order to conduct vital vaccination campaigns against polio or other diseases, to more lasting access agreements in areas of conflict. Arrangements of this kind have been possible in other complex emergencies, and could be possible in Afghanistan, too.

The situation in Afghanistan requires a closely coordinated approach and close partnership between the Afghan Government and the international community. Humanitarian efforts need to find their proper place in this situation. I hope this Council will support efforts to find new ways to improve our humanitarian response, while the work of stabilizing and rebuilding Afghanistan continues.

The President: I thank Mr. Holmes for his briefing. In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Rangin Dadfar Spantâ, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan.

Mr. Spantâ (Afghanistan): Mr. President, I would like to express to you my warmest regards and gratitude for convening this important meeting that demonstrates the commitment of the international community towards a democratic, stable and prosperous Afghanistan. I would also like to welcome my dear friend, Minister Qureshi, with whom I had a very productive meeting this morning.

I welcome the special report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1806 (2008) on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (S/2008/434).

Precisely 10 minutes after the terrorist attack on the embassy of India in Kabul on Monday, 7 July, I witnessed the bloody scene of that attack, which resulted in the killing of women and children, Indian diplomats and security personnel, as well as injuries to dozens of innocent civilians. I am still overwhelmed by this brutal and cold-blooded act of terrorism. Afghanistan condemns this heinous act of terrorism in the strongest possible terms and sympathizes with those who lost their lives. We share the grief of the families of the victims.

This act of violence is neither the first nor the last in a succession of increasingly brutal attacks that has targeted the people of Afghanistan, the region and the world. In recent months, we have witnessed a sharp increase in terrorist acts, including the assassination attempt on President Karzai, the Kandahar jailbreak and a drastic increase in the number of casualties borne by international forces. Those who are behind the Taliban and Al-Qaida have enhanced their support to those groups, which in turn have increased the scope and pace of their terrorist activities. These groups have shifted their focus towards Afghanistan as a part of their psychological war designed to sabotage the peace process in my country and affect the regional and global public opinion. One of the main factors contributing to the deterioration of the security situation in the country is the de facto truce in the tribal areas beyond our borders.

(spoke in Dari)

The terrorist enemy we face is sustained by a complex set of networks and infrastructure and therefore cannot be defeated by military operations inside Afghanistan alone. In order to keep the terrorist threat alive, an elaborate system of terrorist sanctuaries and the financing, recruiting, arming and systematic training of suicide bombers is operating outside our borders. It is clear that we cannot defeat terrorism unless we address its root causes. Success against terrorism will be achieved only by a coherent and integrated regional and global approach.

The Afghan security forces, together with their allies from the International Security Assistance Force-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (ISAF-NATO) and the international coalition against terrorism, are bearing the brunt of this effort, acting as the brave foot soldiers of the free world on this critical battlefield. They are fighting an enemy that is also transnational in composition and international in focus, based specifically outside our borders.

We welcome the results of the elections in Pakistan and the path that the people of Pakistan have chosen leading towards democracy and the establishment of a civilian Government. The people of Pakistan have said "no" to terrorism. We support the democratic process and welcome the expansion of our friendly relations with the civilian Government of Pakistan. It is clear that international terrorist networks constitute a common threat to Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is our firm belief that a joint, coherent and integrated approach undertaken by both Governments is required to eliminate their bases.

Cognizant of the duty of the Government of Afghanistan to ensure security for its citizens throughout the country, we wish, with the support of the international community, to take upon ourselves more responsibilities. In this respect, President Karzai has declared that we will assume responsibility for the security of Kabul in August. Our aim is to take more responsibility gradually, but that requires that the training and equipping of our national army and security forces be accelerated so that they can carry out these duties.

The situation will not be improved without equal focus being placed on such interrelated issues as narcotics, corruption and poverty, which undermine our goals and breed insecurity and instability. The Government of Afghanistan is resolute in the fight against corruption and is ready to take concrete steps to that end. Last Sunday, our Cabinet agreed on the mandates and responsibilities of an anti-corruption monitoring commission. We will establish a special police force, special courts and new attorney offices specifically designed for the fight against corruption.

Our comprehensive counter-narcotics strategy takes into account all security, international, social and economic aspects of the problem. Success in this fight mainly depends on improving good governance, creating alternative livelihoods for farmers and the realization of a coordinated rural development policy. Last year, we took significant steps in the fight against narcotics and poppy cultivation. Production was considerably reduced in 23 out of 34 provinces, and the number of poppy-free provinces increased to 16.

In Helmand province, where we still face severe poppy cultivation and security challenges, the nexus between narcotics and terrorism is evident.

The Paris Conference in Support of Afghanistan was a landmark success for the Government of Afghanistan and the international community as they renew their efforts to assist the Afghan people and Government in the peace and reconstruction process. On behalf of the Government and people of Afghanistan, I express my appreciation for the international community's political and financial commitment to the vision of a democratic, secure and prosperous Afghanistan.

The Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the outstanding financial commitment of $21 billion pledged for its implementation have provided an opportunity to endorse a common road map aimed at achieving the objectives agreed in the Afghanistan Compact and the Millennium Development Goals.

We value the coordinating role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), particularly its focus on improving aid effectiveness and adjustments to coordination mechanisms in order to make them more efficient and delivery-oriented. I would like to stress that Ambassador Kai Eide, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, enjoys the support and full trust of President Karzai and of the Government and people of Afghanistan. We support the efforts of the Secretary-General and his

Special Representative to strengthen UNAMA, as reflected in the Secretary-General's report.

I would also like to thank the United Nations and the donor and international community for their financial and technical support and ongoing humanitarian assistance. The new food appeal made by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community requires serious attention, particularly at a time of increased food insecurity and vulnerability due to the effects of drought this year. We thank Mr. John Holmes for his personal involvement in that issue and his participation in today's discussion.

For the first time in their contemporary history, Afghan citizens have chosen their own model of governance and social, political and economic development. We are preparing for the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2009 and 2010. The participation of all Afghans in the elections is essential to consolidating democracy and to enabling Afghans to shape their own future. We seek the support and cooperation of the international community in preparing the grounds for free, fair and secure elections.

Last but not least, the Government of Afghanistan and the Afghan people sincerely honour and remember the dedication nd sacrifice of the men and women of the internati nal community in the war against terrorism. Once again, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for being invited to participate in this meeting.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan.

Mr. Qureshi (Pakistan): I wish Viet Nam, a friendly developing country of Asia, great success in its presidency of the Council this month. Let me also congratulate Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and the United States delegation on their successful presidency of the Council in June.

The new democratic Government of Pakistan has inherited imposing political, economic and security challenges. We are addressing those challenges democratically and effectively. None among those challenges is as critical as the threat posed by terrorism and extremist violence — a threat we face in common with our neignbour, Afghanistan

I have condemned the terrorist attack against the Indian embassy in Kabul. We deeply regret the loss of life and damage caused by that unacceptable suicide bombing. Any attack on civilians or diplomatic missions is highly reprehensible. As members of the Council know, a day earlier a suicide bomber in Islamabad killed 12 policemen and civilians and wounded scores of people. Again, a day later, there was a series of terrorist bombings in Karachi. We welcome the condemnation of those terrorist attacks by the Security Council.

I am therefore grateful for this opportunity to address the Security Council on the situation in Afghanistan. I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Kai Eide, for his briefing this afternoon and to assure him of our cooperation. Pakistan supports the central coordinating role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in accordance with its mandate, which is specific and limited to Afghanistan. Bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan will continue to be conducted between the democratically elected Governments of the two countries.

May I also thank Under-Secretary-General John Holmes for his briefing on the humanitarian aspects of the situation in Afghanistan.

Since the Bonn Agreement, considerable progress has been made in Afghanistan. We need to consolidate those gains and effectively address the outstanding challenges, in particular the intensifying threat posed by terrorist violence and militant insurgency. The continuing insecurity and violence in several parts of Afghanistan can be attributed to a complex interplay of several factors — the Taliban, Al-Qaida, lingering warlordism, factional rivalries and criminal activity including, but not limited to, the drug trade.

Peace and stability in Afghanistan are in Pakistan's vital interest. The bonds of geography, history, faith and culture inextricably link the destinies of our two nations. We face a common threat of extremism and terrorism. Peace and stability are essential to enabling Pakistan and Afghanistan to serve as the hub and corridor for trade and economic cooperation between the dynamic regions of South Asia, Central Asia, China and the Gulf.

Apart from the Afghan people, the people of Pakistan have suffered the most from the decades of

conflict in Afghanistan. We have hosted over 3 million refugees; we have been afflicted with drugs and arms; and our frontier regions, which were previously peaceful, have been inflamed by the three decades of war and instability in Afghanistan, especially after 2001, when many Al-Qaida and Taliban elements crossed the border into Pakistan.

Pakistan's contribution to the fight against terrorism and extremism is well known. Much of the success against Al-Qaida and Taliban has been achieved with our support and cooperation. We have lost more soldiers than any other country in the effort. Yet, we remain determined to defeat and eliminate terrorism and its root causes. An end to conflict in Afghanistan will help to restore normalcy on our side of the border; conversely, we recognize that our efforts to stabilize, pacify and promote development in our frontier region will also have a positive impact on the situation across the border.

Pakistan has taken several measures to prevent cross-border infiltration by terrorists and insurgents. Those measures have curbed such cross-border movement, but the security environment on our side deteriorated sharply as a result of our role in the counter-terrorism campaign. In 2007, Al-Qaida and some Taliban-linked groups turned on Pakistan and its security forces. Last year, there were a larger number of suicide bombings in Pakistan than there were in Afghanistan, resulting in 2,000 civilian casualties. Pakistan lost Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto — a leader of great stature and vision — to terrorist attack. This terrorist onslaught continues. The recent suicidal attack in Islamabad suggests that terrorists' threat to Pakistan is far from over. Naturally, this has led to growing popular concern, and to questioning by some of the excessive reliance on the military option. However, there is also popular disenchantment in Pakistan, including in our frontier region, with the terrorists and extremists, as evident from the success of mainstream political parties in the region in our elections of 18 February.

The new democratic Government in Pakistan cannot but be sensitive to the sentiments of our people. The new holistic strategy we have evolved seeks to restore peace in our frontier regions, halt and reverse extremism and eliminate terrorism and violence through political dialogue and socio-economic measures, but retaining the option to use force whenever required. We remain committed to cooperation with Afghanistan and the coalition forces to stabilize Afghanistan. Political reconciliation and economic reconstruction and development are our priority options to win over the people, the tribes and the moderates and to isolate the terrorists and violent extremists. In the context of these pacification efforts, it is important to note that the problems and threats in each area and region of our frontier — as well as across the border — differ from region to region. Pacification will therefore require painstaking efforts, region by region, to win the trust and support of local people and their leaders. We are negotiating with tribal leaders and others with influence in those regions — not with the terrorists or with those who do not eschew violence.

Reconciliation and reconstruction are the only sustainable solution to insurgent violence and instability. We plan massive investment for the reconstruction of the area and its incorporation into the domestic political mainstream of the country. We welcome the commitment by the United States to the creation of reconstruction and opportunity zones in the region and its pledge to provide $750 million over three years to support those zones.

While we seek peace through dialogue and development, challenges to the authority of the Government, acts of terrorism and cross-border attacks in Afghanistan, will not be tolerated. Where such challenges and violations occur, the Government will take forceful action to eliminate them. We are currently doing so in the Khyber Agency against certain violent and criminal extremist militias. The Chief of Army Staff has been given the authority to decide on the application of such military action when required. Pakistan will not allow its territory to be used against other countries. However, no foreign troops will be allowed to operate inside Pakistan.

We can ensure greater success in containing, terrorism and insurgency on both sides of the border through more effective cooperation and matching military measures. This is a joint responsibility. Pakistan will continue active cooperation within the Tripartite Commission. We are prepared to consider suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of such cooperation. At the same time, we feel that our partners too could contribute to enhancing operational cooperation by undertaking the following measures: expansion of military deployments and check posts on the Afghan side of the border to match Pakistan's

100,000 military personnel and 1,200 check-posts; real-time intelligence sharing; caution in the use of artillery and aerial attacks, to avoid accidents or territorial violations; supply of counter-insurgency equipment requested by Pakistan; more effective checking of the 40,000 daily legal crossings, including through use of biometric identity cards; and relocation of Afghan refugee camps close to the border from Pakistan to controlled sites in Afghanistan.

The bonds that bind the peoples of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the mutuality of our strategic interests and the democratic mandates of our Governments dictate that political relations between our countries should be much better than they have been in recent months. Foreign Minister Spantâ and I have made a beginning by exchanging visits during the last two months. President Karzai, whom I had the honour to meet in Kabul, was one of the last people to see our martyred leader, Benazir Bhutto, hours before her tragic assassination.

Yet, clearly, we need to do more to overcome suspicion and distrust. We will do our best to reassure our Afghan brothers and sisters that our Government is inspired by nothing but goodwill towards them. They too should make every effort to address our concerns.

I would suggest that we take some initial steps, such as the following: declaring mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, in accordance with the Kabul Declaration; not allowing our respective territories to be used against each other; avoiding provocative statements; intensifying the frequency of mutual visits at all levels; reviving and reinvigorating the jirga process, in which respect Pakistan will soon convene the smaller jirga meeting we have agreed on; and supporting the Ankara process as well as the Afghanistan-Iran-Pakistan tripartite cooperation process.

The economic relationship and cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan is already intimate and intense. Our trade amounts to around $1 billion; its potential is far more. We want to realize its full potential. Most of Afghanistan's trade transits through Pakistan. Pakistan has committed $300 million for Afghanistan's reconstruction. We have pledged an additional $20 million for the resettlement of Afghan refugees. Responding to the food crisis, and despite shortages in Pakistan, we have authorized the export of 50,000 tons of wheat to Afghanistan at subsidized rates. Pakistan supports the Afghan National Development Strategy, endorsed in Paris, as the engine for economic growth and equitable development. We will host the next meeting of the Afghan Regional Economic Cooperation forum in Islamabad from 28 to 30 August this year.

Pakistan and Afghanistan must press forward on all possible avenues to exploit the significant potential for mutual economic cooperation, for example by: jointly establishing reconstruction opportunity zones along the border, in which Pakistan entrepreneurs would be prepared to invest; implementing Pakistan's plans to import electricity from Central Asia; and implementing the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project.

Afghanistan and Pakistan can succeed in achieving their objective of peace, stability and prosperity through mutual cooperation. They can succeed only if they enjoy the unconditional support of the international community. This debate is a good opportunity to commence an honest and objective evaluation of the challenges we face in Afghanistan and to devise a cooperative strategy for success. That strategy must combine military containment with political reconciliation, administrative control and rapid socio-economic development. The military option should be used as the last, not the first, resort. Military tactics should not create more alienation, more opposition and more enemies. We are convinced that dialogue and reconciliation together, with the calibrated use of force, are the best means to promote peace.

To win this war it is vital to win the hearts and minds of the people. We must build peace in Afghanistan through a bottom-up approach, village by village, district by district, offering incentives and disincentives in order to win the cooperation and support of the local population. Most important, our strategy for success must accelerate reconstruction and development. It must offer hope to the people: hope for peace, for jobs and for better lives for themselves and their children.

The President: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan for the kind wishes he extended to Viet Nam's presidency of the Council.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): Italy fully aligns itself with the statement to be given by the Permanent Representative of France on behalf of the European

Union. I wish to make only a few comments on the challenges that we are facing at this juncture.

At the outset, I wish to warmly thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Eide and Under-Secretary-General Holmes for their clear and comprehensive briefings on the situation in Afghanistan. We are pleased to note that the new leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is living up to the high expectations placed on it by this Council and the international community at large.

Unfortunately, the report of the Secretary-General describes a difficult situation on the ground, with increasing terrorist activities relying on asymmetric tactics, which result in high levels of civilian casualties, as illustrated by Mr. Holmes and by the heinous suicide attack against the Indian embassy in Kabul two days ago. In that regard, we express our most sincere condolences to the people and Governments of Afghanistan and India. The continued use of civilians as human shields and of other, similar indiscriminate techniques by the insurgents is well documented and raises serious concerns. This stands in contrast to the clear commitment and efforts of the Afghan and international military forces to avoid collateral damage in their operations.

Against that challenging background, it is undeniable that the Paris Conference has generated a new positive momentum for the mutual efforts of the Afghan Government and the international community in a spirit of strength and partnership. The generous pledges made in support of the Afghan National Development Strategy were matched by renewed Afghan commitments to pursue political and economic reform and to fight corruption. We cannot defeat the enemies of Afghanistan without mutual trust and understanding.

For its part, Italy is further stepping up its longstanding commitment through new financial pledges, additional assets and enhanced flexibility for its troops.

As indicated in the Secretary-General's report, the Paris Conference was much more than a pledging event. For instance, the Afghanistan Compact review presented by the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board co-chairs served as an excellent tool to analyse in depth the Compact's implementation without jeopardizing the authority and integrity of the document. Furthermore, the Paris Declaration contains a number of key elements that coincide almost perfectly with the priorities identified by resolution 1806 (2008). That broad identity of views is the best recipe for success. Now it is time to translate our best intentions into tangible actions.

In that regard, allow me to recall the key areas within the mandate of UNAMA that are highlighted in resolution 1806 (2008): enhanced coordination and leadership of international efforts; strengthened cooperation with the International Security Assistance Force; political outreach; national reconciliation; governance; humanitarian assistance; promotion of human rights; elections; and regional cooperation. The list covers a range of daunting challenges for the Mission, which now must be provided with substantial additional resources.

On that key point, we fully share Mr. Eide's views. We cannot afford to assign such an ambitious task to a United Nations mission without empowering it accordingly. In that context the role of the Security Council must be one of full support for the recommendations contained in the report before us and eloquently illustrated this afternoon by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. In that spirit, we propose to clearly express such support through a presidential statement, the draft of which we will discuss very soon with the other Security Council members, with a view to an early adoption.

On the specific issue of regional cooperation, I would add our voice to the expressions of support for the efforts already put in place by the Special Representative. We strongly encourage him to make further progress in that crucial area with the support of all relevant stakeholders. For their part, the Foreign Ministers of the G-8 expressed their intention to work closely with UNAMA and interested Governments in order to further develop the G-8, Afghanistan and Pakistan initiative that was launched last year. In that respect, we welcome the constructive dialogue pursued this morning by the Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

I will conclude by reiterating once again the basic idea that we cannot ask the United Nations to do more in terms of coordination without a genuine commitment by every single international actor to comply with the United Nations coordination role. We are fully aware of the need to develop a culture of

coordination. At the same time, the essential role of the United Nations must continue to go hand-in-hand with the continuous reinforcement of Afghan ownership and leadership in all sectors, ranging from security to the provision of services to the population.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to also speak on behalf of the European Union and those countries that have aligned themselves with this statement. I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for holding this debate and thank Mr. Kai Eide and Mr. John Holmes for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The European Union welcomes the international conference on support to Afghanistan held 12 June 2008 in Paris. Allow me to reiterate here the continued full commitment of the European Union to the final declaration of the conference, published under the auspices of the Presidents of France and Afghanistan and the Secretary-General. The European Union welcomes the identification of priorities in the report of the Secretary-General and recalls in this regard the key political messages that were announced in Paris.

The first of those is the strengthening of democracy, through competent, transparent and representative Afghan institutions. In that regard, the European Union underlines the importance of preparations for the elections in 2009 and 2010.

Second is the support of the international community to the Afghan National Development Strategy and the guidance that the Afghanistan Compact continues to give to the Afghan Government and the international community acting in its support. Approximately $20 billion were pledged to finance the implementation of the National Strategy. Emphasis has been placed, in that context, on the importance of improving aid effectiveness so that it specifically benefits Afghans. That is an essential aspect.

The Paris Declaration also prioritizes strengthening the presence of the Afghan Government in provinces, fighting corruption and safeguarding democratic achievements, such as freedom of expression and respect for human rights in Afghanistan, including the promotion of gender equality.

Finally, I want to underline before this Council the commitments made by Afghan authorities at the conference in terms of the fight against drugs, an issue on which the Council has not remained idle, with the adoption of resolution 1817 (2008) on the control of the precursors of heroin, submitted by Afghanistan and other countries. We must now work towards implementation of its provisions by Afghanistan, but also by neighbouring, transit and producer countries.

Afghanistan is a priority for France and the European Union. That is true of European Union member States engaged in the International Security Assistance Force and the civilian missions. It is also true of the European Commission, which has already committed 3.7 billion euros to the reconstruction of Afghanistan since 2002 and provides, in its assistance strategy for 2007-2013, for a commitment of 610 million euros until 2010.

The commitment of the European Union is reflected, finally, by the European Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL), which has just completed its first year of operations, and at this stage comprises 170 international personnel, deployed in Kabul and in the north, west and south and covering 14 provinces in the country. The European Union has decided to double the size of that mission.

The Paris Conference has brought about an expression of shared responsibility by the international community and the Afghan authorities to strengthen the efficiency and quality of aid. Every Afghan should have access, in their daily lives, to the benefits of the aid provided.

On the one hand, the international community must provide more coherent and coordinated assistance, including through an increased coordination role for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). That assistance should increasingly be channelled through the national Afghan budget and mobilize human resources from Afghanistan. On the other hand, the Afghan Government has pledged to expand reforms to make government structures transparent and accountable.

Having heard the statements of Mr. Holmes and Mr. Eide, I should like to emphasize the importance that we attach to the strengthening of security, which is one of the first priorities of Afghans themselves. In that regard, the European Union expresses its grave concern about the unprecedented increase in acts of violence perpetrated by insurgents. I should like to vigorously

reiterate that the European Union condemns in the strongest terms terrorist attacks against civilians, such as the reprehensible attack against the Indian embassy in Kabul, which the Council has condemned, as well as attacks against humanitarian personnel and convoys, which deprive people of the urgent assistance they need. The European Union reiterates its belief in the need to maintain an environment in which humanitarian activities can take place, and reminds all parties that they must ensure the protection of civilians and respect all their obligations under international law, especially international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, I would like once again to thank the Secretary-General for his report and Special Representative Kai Eide for his briefing. The report and the briefing both offer important recommendations regarding the future of UNAMA and its reconfiguration following the Paris Conference. The Secretary-General and his Special Representative can count on the support of the European Union in putting those recommendations into effect.

Mr. Mubarak (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to warmly welcome Mr. Rangin Dâdfar Spantâ, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, and Mr. Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan. I welcome their participation in this debate on Afghanistan, a friendly country whose situation we hope will improve because the brotherly people of Afghanistan deserve prosperity after having suffered from war for so many years. I would also like to emphasize to the Ministers the cordial and friendly relations that exist between our friendly countries, as well as our readiness to cooperate in the fight against terrorism.

We thank the Secretary-General for the report (S/2008/434) before us. We also wish to thank Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their comprehensive and detailed briefings, which we very much appreciate.

My delegation welcomes the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the financial pledges made at the Paris Conference, held on 12 June 2008. I stress that the implementation of the Strategy requires the promotion of trust between Afghan citizens, the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. I should also like to underscore the importance of respecting and protecting the human rights of the Afghan people. It is also necessary for Afghan forces and the International Security Assistance Force to take every step necessary to protect Afghan civilians as they carry out their operations. Those accused of crimes must be provided fair trials in accordance with international law, international human rights law and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

One of my country's greatest concerns is the ongoing deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan, which is referred to in paragraph 5 of the report of the Secretary-General. The report points to the increase in insurgent activity since the previous reporting period, with such attacks having reached their highest level in May. We are even more concerned about the major increase is civilian casualties, which illustrates the need; now more than ever, for national reconciliation in Afghanistan in order to ensure a secure and stable country in which people enjoy prosperity and security. That is especially true given that experience shows that there is a linkage between security and reconstruction in Afghanistan: the better the security, the more rebuilding projects are implemented. The converse is also true. In that connection, we would like to underscore the need to adopt and implement the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. In that task, there is a joint role to be played by the international community, the Afghan people and the Government of Afghanistan.

We agree with the point made in the report of the Secretary-General that the elections to be held in 2009 and 2010 must be free and fair. In that regard, we would like to underscore the role assumed by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to support the election process and to make it as credible as possible. We would also like to emphasize the fact that the success of the elections depends not only on the procedural aspects of their conduct, but also on the participation of all Afghan people. That leads me to emphasize once again the importance of achieving national reconciliation in Afghanistan in order to make the elections a success. That requires the reform of the country's civilian, military and administrative institutions so that they can provide security in Afghanistan's provinces and services to Afghan citizens. It will also require the control of the warlords over those institutions to be

broken. We should also pay greater attention to the priorities set out by the Secretary-General in paragraph 10 of his report.

My delegation fully understands the importance of the role of Afghanistan's neighbours in restoring stability to the country. We commend the efforts made by those countries, especially in combating narcotics smuggling.

We emphasize the importance of providing UNAMA with the resources and expertise necessary for it to carry out its expanded mandate under resolution 1806 (2008). We hope that donor countries will honour their pledges in that regard. We also endorse the recommendation of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General that the necessary resources be provided in order for UNAMA to fulfil its responsibilities under the mandate entrusted to it to bring prosperity to the brotherly people of Afghanistan.

Mr. Belle (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, my delegation welcomes the presence in the Chamber of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Allow me also to welcome Mr. Eide, who has made his first briefing to the Security Council since he assumed his responsibilities. In three and a half months, he has already done remarkable work in meeting expectations of him, which I must say are very great. Belgium commends him and encourages him to continue in that direction. My country has always believed in a central role for the United Nations in guiding international efforts and coordinating the actions of the Government of Afghanistan and its international partners.

While my delegation fully associates itself with the statement just delivered by the Ambassador of France on behalf of the European Union, we should like to make the following comments.

Belgium generally agrees with the observations contained in the report (S/2008/434) of the Secretary-General. The strengthened mandate for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) set out in resolution 1806 (2008) continues to be completely appropriate. However, more resources are needed to carry out that mandate and address the priorities identified at the Paris Conference.

My country welcomes the announcement of the opening of six new regional provincial offices by the summer of 2009, with the initial phase taking place in the provinces of Uruzgan and Baghlan. A greater United Nations presence is in fact vital, but in order for the value added of our Organization to be completely effective, adequate funds will need to be made available in terms of both personnel and security. Mr. Eide reminded us of that a few moments ago.

My delegation fully supports the list in section III of the report (S/2008/434) of issues to which more attention must be paid. The requests for extra personnel for the elections, for support for the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, for aid effectiveness, for the establishment of institutions and for the rendering of humanitarian assistance are now very legitimate and must be fully supported.

With regard to the internal organization of UNAMA, Belgium supports any reform proposed by Mr. Eide that would allow him to better meet his responsibilities. The drafting of United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Afghanistan is also to be encouraged to improve the coherence and the effectiveness of the United Nations response.

My delegation would also like to welcome the presence of Mr. Holmes and thank him for the briefing that he gave us on his recent visit to Afghanistan. The Humanitarian Action Plan that will now be developed should allow us to do a better job in meeting the humanitarian needs, which are still very real. Belgium shares his concern with respect to the growing number of civilian casualties, mostly caused by those opposing the Afghan Government. Monday's suicide attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul has once again shown that tragically. In that regard, I wish to offer Belgium's condolences to the families of the victims and to the Governments of Afghanistan and India.

My delegation welcomes the participation in this debate of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and Pakistan. For Belgium, regional cooperation has a key role to play in the process of the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan. As already stated by President Karzai and President Musharraf, the fates of the two countries are tightly linked. The events of these last few weeks have reminded us of that once again. We therefore encourage Kabul and Islamabad to spare no efforts in cooperating closely, also in terms of economic cooperation. What we have heard today has been encouraging in that respect.

A month ago, Afghanistan and the international community reaffirmed in Paris their partnership to implement the Afghanistan Compact and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy under the leadership of the Afghans. Belgium welcomes the pledges of aid by the international community and the commitment by the Government of Afghanistan to pursue political and economic reforms. Within that joint responsibility progress is crucial to fight corruption and drugs and to promote good governance and the rule of law. Improving the lives of Afghan men and women — which, as the Secretary-General and the Special Representative have reminded us, is our collective objective — depends on that.

In conclusion, in Paris wishes were also expressed for a greater role on the part of the United Nations in terms of coordination. The United Nations, in particular UNAMA and at its head Special Representative Eide, have the intention and determination to meet the expectations of the international community. We need to give them the space and the means, both human and financial, that are necessary to do that.

Mr. Khalilzad (United States of America): I would like to welcome the presence and statements of Foreign Minister Spantâ of Afghanistan and of Foreign Minister Qureshi of Pakistan. I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kai Eide and Under-Secretary-General John Holmes for their briefings this afternoon.

On behalf of the United States, I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Eide and the staff of the United Nations Mission of Assistance in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their hard work and dedication to improving the lives of the Afghan people and helping Afghanistan to succeed. At the recent Paris Conference, the Final Declaration of the three co-chairs — the Secretary-General, the President of France and the President of Afghanistan — affirmed strong support for the expanded role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNAMA to lead coordination of the international civilian efforts, as well as coordination between the Afghan Government and the international community.

Today, I would like to make four points. First, we need to present a common front against extremists and terrorists in words and in deeds. We are deeply troubled by the increasing violence in Pakistan and Afghanistan. As the Secretary-General's report indicated, May 2008 recorded the highest number of security incidents in Afghanistan since the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001.

Those attacks are becoming increasingly complex and coordinated. Insurgents and terrorists have grown more effective and more aggressive, most recently in the cowardly and despicable attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul. Greater efforts to increase security are vital. However, the international community must support not only increased security efforts but also a broad, coordinated and comprehensive approach that includes infrastructure improvement, investment in agriculture and the creation of new businesses. Progress is critical in all those areas to ultimately stabilize Afghanistan.

Secondly, the implementation and success of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy will require a strengthened partnership between Afghanistan and the international community, with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNAMA playing a crucial role. The launch of the National Development Strategy in Paris means that some 80 international stakeholders are now engaged in an Afghan-led effort to implement a road map for activities in three broad areas: security; governance, rule of law and human rights; and economic and social development. The Government of Afghanistan has commitments to its people and to the international community to make progress in those areas, to fight corruption and the trafficking of narcotics, to extend its reach throughout the country, and to increase its capacity to serve the people of Afghanistan. To keep the confidence of the Afghan people and its international partners, it must deliver on those commitments.

The donor community has responsibilities to Afghanistan in keeping with their commitments in Paris and in previous meetings. UNAMA will play an essential role in ensuring that the commitments made at the Paris Conference are met. The United States is steadfast in acknowledging and following up on its commitments and responsibilities in Afghanistan. The international community should not risk Afghan disillusionment with its international partners.

The countries that met in Paris committed themselves not only to providing greater resources to the reconstruction of Afghanistan but also to making

the provision of those resources more transparent, accountable and effective. We welcome the fact that they are all committed to more local procurement and capacity-building and to ensuring that the benefits of development can reach all provinces equitably.

For UNAMA to play that role, it will require greater resources so that Special Representative of the Secretary-General Eide will have the tools to do his job, aid can actually reach the Afghan people and the donor countries can get the greatest value added for their contributions. We concur with the Secretary-General's recommendation that UNAMA expand its presence throughout Afghanistan with the opening of six new provincial offices in the next 12 months. We strongly support Special Representative of the Secretary-General Eide's drive to increase the capacity and effectiveness of UNAMA in a number of key areas through staffing increases and structural changes that allow for an integrated approach, thereby ensuring all United Nations and international efforts are properly coordinated.

Coordination is UNAMA's key mandate and priority, and UNAMA has responsibility for coordinating between civilian and military efforts, the Afghan Government and the donor community, within the donor community, and within the United Nations family. Therefore, we fully support and encourage any and all efforts by Special Representative Eide to reinforce UNAMA's central coordinating role, as provided for in resolution 1806 (2008).

Thirdly, we fully agree with the Special Representative's conclusion that elections are a key priority and an important measure of Afghanistan's democratic progress. The Afghan Independent Election Commission is the lead coordinating body for the August 2009 presidential and provincial council elections and the summer 2010 parliamentary elections. We strongly urge Special Representative Eide to work closely with the Afghan Government, the Afghan Independent Election Commission and the United Nations Development Programme to relieve pressing issues relating to voter registration and the passage of the new election law.

Fourthly, Afghanistan's neighbours have an important role to play in supporting the Afghan Government's efforts to secure its borders. Resolution 1806 (2008) highlights UNAMA's role in supporting regional cooperation and the Special Representative has been active in that area. A stable Afghanistan could be a land bridge creating an economic zone comprised of Central Asia, South Asia and South-West Asia. Afghanistan should not used as a geopolitical battleground and we call on Afghanistan's neighbours not to arm or finance insurgents or allow them to operate from their territories.

Today, I want to reaffirm America's steadfast commitment to the people of Afghanistan. The United States will continue to work closely with our partners on those issues until the Afghan people can live in stability, prosperity and democracy.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): We, too, thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Kai Eide, for presenting the special report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1806 (2008) on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. We also thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. John Holmes, for his briefing on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

South Africa welcomes the successful outcomes of the international Conference in Support of Afghanistan that was held in Paris on 12 June 2008. That meeting was another important step in enhancing the partnership between Afghanistan and the international community. We are pleased that the Paris conference resulted in pledges of international assistance totalling about $20 billion. We hope that those pledges will be translated into actual commitments and will make a difference in improving the lives of the Afghan people.

My delegation continues to support the central and impartial role of UNAMA under the leadership of Special Representative Eide in leading the coordination of international efforts and in coordinating between the Afghan Government and the international community. We further support the strengthening of UNAMA's coordination capacity to enable the mission itself to make a significant difference on the ground.

South Africa reaffirms its support for the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy under the ownership of the Afghan people. We concur with the assessment of the Secretary-General that the implementation of this Strategy will require the strong support of the international community. My delegation

supports a common approach that will integrate security, governance, the rule of law, human rights and social and economic development in Afghanistan.

While the partnership between the Afghan people and the international community continues to strengthen, the persistent threat to security posed by insurgent and terrorist activities is the main challenge to Afghanistan's nation-building efforts and stability.

South Africa expresses its concern regarding the recent terrorist attacks targeting innocent civilians, children and diplomats, as well as any attempt to destabilize Afghanistan.

In conclusion, we would like to stress the importance of regional cooperation as an effective means to promote security, governance and development in Afghanistan. In that context, my delegation welcomes the Special Representative's fruitful visits to Iran and Pakistan. We would support similar visits in the future aimed at strengthening regional cooperation in creating a stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

Finally, we thank the Italian delegation for preparing a draft presidential statement on Afghanistan. South Africa is committed to working with other delegations to ensure its early adoption.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Eide, for his briefing. We would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Holmes for his briefing. The Chinese delegation welcomes the presence of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and Pakistan and thanks them for their statements.

China is pleased to note that the Paris Conference has raised $20 billion for Afghanistan, which demonstrates once again the staunch support of the international community for peace and reconstruction in that country. We welcome the Afghanistan National Development Strategy drafted by Afghanistan and we support the central role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in coordinating the assistance efforts of the international community to Afghanistan, in accordance with the relevant provisions of resolution 1806 (2008).

At present, the Afghan Government is still confronted by daunting challenges characterized by the worsening security situation in that country and an increase in terrorist and violent incidents. China was shocked by the suicide bombing of the embassy of India in Kabul on 7 July. We offer our deep condolences to the victims and their families. China condemns terrorist activities in all their forms.

We call upon the international community to strengthen its assistance to Afghanistan in order to help the country address its challenges. In that regard, I would like to highlight the following points.

First, the Afghan Government, together with the international community, should spare no effort in resolving the security issue. China calls upon all ethnic groups and factions in Afghanistan to put the long-term interests of the nation and the people above everything else, nurture and practice a culture of reconciliation and maintain and strengthen the authority of the central Government of Afghanistan.

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has been playing an important role in maintaining security and stability in Afghanistan. We appreciate its efforts in that regard. At the same time, we are concerned that ISAF military operations have caused civilian casualties. We also believe that the international community should provide more resources to help Afghanistan to strengthen its military and police forces so that they can independently and as soon as possible assume the responsibility for maintaining national security and social stability.

Secondly, the key to achieving long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan lies in accelerating economic growth and improving the livelihood of its people. China highly appreciates the fact that the Afghanistan National Development Strategy places special emphasis on poverty alleviation and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. China calls upon the international community to step up its efforts to assistance Afghanistan in implementing the Strategy so that the Afghan people can see and enjoy the fruits of development, thus re-establishing their confidence in the future prospects of the country.

Thirdly, capacity-building should also be given priority consideration in Afghanistan's reconstruction process. Human resources are key to national development. The Afghan Government should invest in building a well-qualified team of civil servants. While providing wide-ranging material assistance to Afghanistan, the international community should focus

on training personnel in all fields and on strengthening the country's capacity-building.

It is the shared aspiration of the international community to see Afghanistan achieve stability and development, a goal towards which we are all working. As a friendly neighbour of Afghanistan, China attaches great importance to that country's stability and development. At the Paris Conference, China again pledged this year to provide Afghanistan with a grant of RMB50 million. We will continue to offer assistance to Afghanistan within our abilities.

Mr. Suescum (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Mr. Rangin Dâdfar Spantâ and Mr. Shah Mehmood Qureshi respectively, for their presence and statements here today.

I also wish to express my gratitude for the briefings given by Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

As was made patently clear only a few days ago by the horrendous suicide attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul, and as was underscored in the briefings we heard today, the gravest problem currently facing Afghanistan is the lack of security. Panama, on principle, has always emphasized the role that the countries of the region must play in the resolution of conflicts on the Security Council's agenda. We therefore welcome the efforts of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan's other neighbours in that regard. Those countries have recognized that a stable Afghanistan is in the interest not only of that country itself, but of the entire region. We believe, however, that more effective regional action will require those countries to view their support to their neighbour not in the context of a race for influence or of regional competition, but rather as an endeavour that will benefit everyone.

With regard to the Secretary-General's report, we support its recommendations and would stress two particular aspects. The first is the responsibility of Afghan leaders to guide the reconstruction of their country responsibly and comprehensively. As we heard today, they have made significant progress, but the corruption and impunity prevalent in various Government sectors have a highly destructive impact on the efforts of those who are working to rebuild the country and undermine popular support for such efforts. Corruption and impunity prevent Afghan society from enjoying the dividends of peace and increase its frustration with the situation. Such issues must be resolved with a renewed sense of urgency.

The second aspect is the need for the international community to maintain its firm commitment to Afghanistan, in particular with respect to the harm caused by extremist groups as they seek to derail progress towards democracy and institutionalization. We welcome recent multilateral diplomatic efforts and the improvements made in the field by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the International Security Assistance Force in connection with the Afghanistan Compact. The mission is complex, however, and the remaining obstacles are vast.

The international community must address the problems in Afghanistan in a balanced and comprehensive manner, while ensuring that the protection of human rights and economic and social development are not sacrificed to meet short-term objectives or to impose hasty solutions that may momentarily seem to be of greater importance. We hope that the restructuring of UNAMA will reflect those necessities, some of which have been singled out today by Special Representative Eide. We must ensure that UNAMA has all the resources and means necessary to enhance its capacity to coordinate the difficult task of rebuilding Afghanistan.

Mr. Weisleder (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan and Pakistan and express our gratitude for the presence of and briefings given by Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Over the past three decades, Afghanistan, a country surrounded by hills and mountains, has been the arena of abrupt political change, almost always brought about by war and violence. Its centuries-old history offers no explanation for the situation; quite the contrary. Afghans, the international community and the United Nations are currently facing one of the most complex situations with which we are seized. The three founding pillars of the United Nations — the search for

peace and stability, the protection of human rights and economic and social development — have yet to be erected in that country.

The situation is not unprecedented or exclusive to Afghanistan. It is quite common — indeed, practically the rule — for countries emerging from armed conflict to suffer serious setbacks in their economic development and in the protection and promotion of human rights. In the case of Afghanistan and certain African countries, however, that syndrome is particularly acute. Afghanistan is caught up in a vicious cycle wherein insecurity engenders further violence, which stifles foreign investment and the development of democratic institutions, in turn promoting more fighting and violations of human rights.

The process also requires us to take into account the serious problem posed by the cultivation and processing of drug crops, with all their consequences. The regional dimension of the conflict is another factor complicating the response and further aggravating the threat to international peace and security.

With regard to the issue of drugs, Afghanistan's share of global opium production rose from 11 per cent in 2001 to 93 per cent currently. It is estimated that drug trafficking represents half of the gross national product of Afghanistan and that one in seven Afghans is involved in opium-trafficking activities. Such facts and figures reflect the magnitude of the problem, but the gravity of the situation may be better understood when we consider that, as in other regions, insurgent groups — the Taliban in this instance — receive most of their income from such illegal activities, which provide them with the resources necessary to recruit citizens who lack employment and all other economic activity to support themselves.

Another factor aggravating the situation is the fact that 300,000 young people join the economically active population every year. As part of the unskilled labour force, they lack the tools and skills that would enable them to take charge of their own future. Those young people are easy prey for extremists.

We believe it is possible to change this vicious circle a virtuous circle. This requires a holistic approach in which the undoubtedly crucial ongoing fight against the insurgents is combined with the creation of jobs and economic opportunities. The Afghanistan National Development Strategy, which has been endorsed by the Government and the international community and is based on the Afghanistan Compact, provides a good road map to that end, so long as progress is made simultaneously on all tracks, in particular in those areas that will most quickly provide economic opportunity and jobs for the people.

Also, the Afghan people must play an increasingly central role in shaping their future. There is reason to think that the upsurge in violence is linked to progress made in preparing for the 2009 presidential elections and the 2010 parliamentary elections. The elections must therefore be flanked by actions that will realize the promise of democracy, improving the daily lives of the Afghan people. We support the holding of those elections.

As the report of the Secretary-General makes very clear, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has a very important role to play throughout this process. To ensure that it can play that role, it must be strengthened — both in terms of the quality, quantity and specialization of its human resources and in terms of material resources of many kinds. We endorse the report of the Secretary-General and hope that it can be translated into practice.

Finally, Costa Rica is of the view that, in order to achieve all that I have mentioned — albeit gradually, but also progressively and sustainably — the pledges made at the 12 June Paris Conference must not be empty promises: the $20 billion pledged must be disbursed in keeping with the needs expressed and the plans made. Those responsible for carrying out the corresponding actions — first and foremost the Afghan Government — must do so efficiently and transparently. Only the clear attainment of the objectives proposed in the strategy set out in the Secretary-General's report and the speedy achievement of some concrete results will help change Afghanistan's direction, rescue it from this vicious circle and return it to a path on which every achievement will improve the chances of attaining the next one.

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): Let me begin by joining previous speakers in thanking Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and Under-Secretary-General John Holmes for their respective briefings.

My delegation warmly welcomes the presence of His Excellency Mr. Rangin Dâdfar Spantâ, Minister for

Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, and of His Excellency Mr. Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, at this debate. We thank them for their very important statements.

Since the 2001 Bonn Agreement, Afghanistan has been regarded as an exemplary State arising from conflict. In a few years, it has achieved notable progress in various sectors. But now, what Afghanistan has accomplished is being greatly corroded by serious challenges to the country's security and stability. Fear of sliding back to a conflict situation is increasing as the activities of militants grow stronger. The most recent bomb attacks in Kabul reflect the urgent need to address the security challenges.

Military measures remain critical in responding to the increasing attacks by militants. The role of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has been central in assisting the Afghan Government to tackle the challenge. But military measures are not the only instrument to achieve peace and stability. As the militants continue to rely on asymmetric attacks, it becomes more difficult to adopt a full-scale military response.

The situation in Afghanistan must be dealt with through a comprehensive strategy that incorporates the pillars of security, governance and rule of law and socio-economic development. Indonesia therefore attaches great importance to the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, which serves as a road map for comprehensive action over the next five years.

An Afghan-led reconciliation process will continue to be needed in order to achieve sustainable peace. All-inclusive reconciliation requires all parties involved to renounce violence, respect justice, equality, freedom and tolerance and promote consultation. Addressing the drug economy also remains an urgent matter, as it is particularly linked to sustaining the insurgency.

The intensifying conflict in Afghanistan, exacerbated by natural disasters, has caused multiple humanitarian challenges, as described by Under-Secretary-General Holmes. With regard to financing for humanitarian assistance, there is an urgent need to allocate more resources to meet the emergency requirements of millions of vulnerable people. Mobilization of resources by the United Nations and by non-United Nations humanitarian agencies is a commendable effort.

As attacks against humanitarian deliveries continue, the protection of humanitarian actors and their work becomes critical. These attacks constitute a clear violation of international humanitarian law. My delegation strongly deplores such attacks, which not only jeopardize the lives of humanitarian workers but also could put the Afghan people in a more difficult situation.

Regional cooperation continues to be pertinent to the strengthening of Afghanistan's engagement in regional dynamics and its capacity to address transnational problems. Bilateral partnerships between Afghanistan and neighbouring States in addressing the security challenges and in finding mutually acceptable solutions to humanitarian problems are also of paramount importance.

My delegation also attaches primary importance to the Paris Conference on Afghanistan, held on 12 June 2008, which not only resulted in $20 billion in pledges but also reaffirmed the Afghanistan Compact and supported the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. We are hopeful that disbursement of the pledges will be expeditious and that implementation will be effective and efficient.

In the current situation in Afghanistan, the role and contribution of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) becomes more crucial than ever. Its good-offices support, as mandated by Council resolution 1806 (2008), in the implementation of Afghan-led reconciliation programmes remains pertinent. UNAMA's assistance to the Afghan Independent Electoral Commission in ensuring free and fair elections in 2009 and 2010 will be instrumental in the consolidation of democracy in Afghanistan.

Finally, Indonesia wishes to reaffirm its full support for UNAMA and its work, and for its contribution towards a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): My delegation wishes at the outset to welcome Their Excellencies the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and of Pakistan and to thank them for their statements. We wish also to thank Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their most informative briefings on the situation in Afghanistan.

We note that the situation is far from hopeless, especially given the renewed hope that has arisen following the Paris Conference of 12 June, which laid the foundation for a political and financial partnership between Afghanistan and the international community towards the reconstruction of the country, based also on the new Afghanistan National Development Strategy. Approximately $20 billion were pledged at the Conference, including for support for the preparation of the 2009 and 2010 elections, which testifies to the full commitment of the international community to assisting the Afghan Government in pursuing the reconstruction and development efforts that have been under way since 2001.

In spite of that tangible fact, challenges unfortunately remain as the country faces such enormous difficulties as the security situation, as we were reminded yet again by the recent attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul. We firmly condemn that attack.

At the political level, the Paris Declaration underscores the importance of holding elections in 2009 and 2010 in order to consolidate democracy in Afghanistan. It also calls on the international community to give particular support to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme, must guarantee the holding of free, fair and secure elections. We are encouraged by the firm resolve of the Afghan Government to pursue constructive dialogue with civil society, local communities and marginalized groups, not simply to promote peace, but also to seek the participation of all in forging a pluralistic and democratic society.

There is hardly any need to recall the essential role that the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan must play in the context of regional cooperation and good-neighbourliness in helping the Afghan Government to successfully implement its policy of national peacebuilding and stabilization.

On the institutional level, the Government has taken a series of steps to build on the progress achieved in recent years, in particular by improving the performance of public administration, local governance, the judiciary, the police and law enforcement institutions.

With regard to the economic situation in the country, we welcome the resolve of the Afghan Government to focus on the agriculture and energy sectors in order to stimulate national economic development by involving the private sector and promoting its growth and by establishing a conducive environment for attracting investment and creating jobs. Such efforts could well be successful, especially if they enjoy the support of the international community, which is committed to providing increased, more predictable and better coordinated financial aid in order to sustainably enhance the management capacity of the national budget and State institutions.

We must also continue to provide humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan, in particular during these times of food crisis. We welcome the preventive measures that have already been taken and call on the international community to respond to the urgent needs expressed by the Afghan people.

I will conclude by paying tribute to the Afghan people, whose determination to fight for its existence within a strong, secure State, governed by the rule of law, deserves our full support.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, Mr. Spantâ, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, Mr. Qureshi. We thank Mr. Eide for his briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and for submitting the report of the Secretary-General. We are grateful to Mr. Holmes for his comprehensive briefing on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

We support the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of Mission. We are carefully studying the recommendations of the Secretary-General on strengthening the potential of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and broadening its presence in the field. We expect the Secretariat to provide detailed financial calculations with justifications.

We are seriously concerned about the continuing degradation of the military and political situation in Afghanistan caused by the terrorist activity of the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremists, the most recent example of whose criminal activity was the explosion at the Indian embassy in Kabul. Such actions undermine the fragile foundations of Afghan statehood and impede the achievement of long-term stability. In

that connection, we wish once again to emphasize the need to pursue the uncompromising fight against the insurgents and the fact that we cannot permit attempts to end the Security Council sanctions regime against individuals and entities involved with Al-Qaida and the Taliban.

It is no secret that the activities of terrorists are predominantly fuelled by the drug trade. Unfortunately, the Afghan Government and the international military presence in the country have not yet been able to curb the growth of drug production. It is therefore essential to mobilize joint efforts to create anti-narcotic security belts that would enable us to stifle the drug trade. In order to deprive the drug trade and terrorism of a financial base, it is extremely important to add financial security belts, an initiative that Russia advanced in August 2007 at the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Bishkek.

We must also make full use of the regional organizations that have proven their effectiveness in working in this area, in particular the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. At present, a very effective mechanism for enhancing international efforts to stem the tide of Afghan drugs is the 2003 CSTO anti-drug initiative known as Operation Channel. In 2007 alone, more than 28 tonnes of narcotics and precursors were confiscated. The Operation enjoys the active participation of representatives from Russia, other CSTO member States, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the United States and European countries. Our Afghan colleagues joined the Operation in 2007.

We believe it necessary to develop practical interaction between the CSTO and NATO in the area of counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics work, which would help to reinforce the efforts of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The relevance of cooperation between those two organizations in Afghanistan was highlighted by the agreements reached at the NATO summit in Bucharest on organizing transit for non-military cargo for the needs of ISAF along the northern route through Russia and countries of the Central Asia.

It is alarming that, as a result of ISAF operations, there have recently been increasing casualties among civilians in Afghanistan, many from errant air strikes. We emphasize the need to end the harm being done to the civilian population. In addition to the humanitarian aspect, such incidents are exploited by the Taliban and other extremist forces seeking to undermine the country's process stabilization process.

We welcome the recent visit to Afghanistan of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy. We share her concern regarding the death of children and the use of underage combatants by anti-Government groups. We must ensure the rights of children detained in prisons, including those under ISAF control and those accused of involvement with insurgent groups.

An effective settlement of the situation in Afghanistan and the effective handling of serious problems by the Government will be possible only if the efforts of the international community are coordinated under the auspices of the United Nations and if more leeway is granted to Kabul's handling of intra-Afghan problems. Of major significance in that regard is the establishment of truly combat-ready national armed forces and law enforcement agencies equipped with modern weapons. Of course, the significant support of the international community to Afghan Government forces in resolving those key issues is essential.

In that context, the results of the 12 June Paris Conference in Support of Afghanistan are of major significance. Russia actively participated in the work of that forum. We confirmed our commitment to the stabilization process in Afghanistan, especially in terms of helping deal with security and combating the drug threat.

Enabling non-military cargo destined for the International Security Assistance Force to transit through Russia, having forgiven the substantial Afghan debt and participating in socio-economic reconstruction programmes constitute Russia's significant practical contribution to the renewal of Afghanistan.

At this difficult time, we are prepared to extend our uncompensated support to the Afghan people. With regard to the appeal made by Afghanistan, the President of the Russian Federation has instructed our Government to expedite the delivery of 15,000 tons of wheat humanitarian assistance. Moreover, in 2008 and 2009, Russia intends to invest $4 million in the multilateral Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund. In the context of overall international efforts, we anticipate that Russia's support will help to transform

Afghanistan into an independent and thriving country freed from its legacy of terrorism and narcotics.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): Let me say how warmly we welcome the presence of the Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan and Pakistan at today's debate. It is very important that they are here, both symbolically and because of the important substance on the issues before us that they have given us. I would like to wish a particularly warm welcome to Kai Eide, following his first three months as Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as to John Holmes, following his important visit to Afghanistan.

Before I comment on the subject of this debate, I would just like to reiterate how appalled we were by the bombing of the Indian embassy in Kabul on 6 July. We were also shocked by the attacks in Pakistan the day before and on the same day. My Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, has made clear, in the strongest terms, our utter condemnation of all those attacks.

The United Kingdom welcomes the Secretary-General's special report (S/2008/434) on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in response to the Paris Conference, held on 12 June. We are grateful to the Government of France for holding such a successful conference, which provided a timely and welcome reaffirmation of the international community's commitment to Afghanistan.

I think there has been significant progress in Afghanistan since 2001. We must bear that in mind as we address the very significant challenges that still face us. None of us is complacent about the scale and importance of the task ahead, but we should be proud of what we have achieved so far.

We should not underestimate what is at stake. As this weekend's terrorist attacks in Islamabad and Kabul have tragically illustrated, insecurity in Afghanistan directly affects the people of that country and the wider region. We have a collective responsibility to the people of Afghanistan, and a common interest in confronting those who seek to undermine democracy and pursue their interests through violence, intolerance and extremism. That responsibility falls both on the international community and on the Governments of the region. As we work in partnership with the Government of Afghanistan, we urge them to take early decisive action to improve accountability and combat corruption, as well as to promote political dialogue so that we can build confidence among ordinary Afghans. We want to see early, demonstrable progress in improving the lives of the Afghan people through better security, improved governance and greater prosperity.

Strong United Nations leadership will be essential if we are to continue to make progress. We fully endorse the report's call for all Member States to support a strengthened UNAMA. We applaud Kai Eide for the way in which he has re-energized UNAMA since his appointment in March. We fully support his work to further empower UNAMA as an organization, and the role of the Special Representative. At the Paris Conference, the international community agreed that we must do all we can to support UNAMA in achieving its final goals in Afghanistan. The international community must now back those words with actions, by supporting initiatives that increase UNAMA's effectiveness.

We particularly support the report's proposals and commitment to increase UNAMA's staff, expand its field presence and make structural changes to the Mission. We must ensure urgent implementation of those changes so that they can facilitate better delivery across the board, particularly delivery on governance, delivery on the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and aid effectiveness and delivery on humanitarian challenges and improving United Nations coordination. UNAMA will only be able to deliver on these if it is properly resourced to do so.

We support the priorities identified in the report, including addressing security concerns, support for the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, governance and institution-building, attacking corruption and regional cooperation. We also welcome the focus on elections and agree that there is a need for urgent and decisive action to prepare for the 2009 and 2010 elections and ensure that they are held satisfactorily.

We endorse the priority given by the report to reducing the production and trafficking of drugs. We are extremely concerned at growing evidence of the links between the narcotics trade, the insurgency and wider criminality. It is essential that counter-narcotics efforts be mainstreamed throughout the Government of Afghanistan's policies and that they be supported by the international community.

The Secretary-General's call to focus our collective efforts on the goal of improving the lives of the Afghan people is an important reminder of why the international community is so engaged in Afghanistan. The United Kingdom will continue to play its full part in achieving that objective, in partnership with the Government of Afghanistan, Afghanistan's neighbours, the United Nations and the international community.

Mr. Jurica (Croatia): First of all, I would like to welcome the presence among us of His Excellency Mr. Rangin Dâdfar Spantâ, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, and His Excellency Mr. Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan. I thank them for their statements. I would also like to express our appreciation for today's briefings by Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

Croatia fully associates itself with the statement made earlier by the Permanent Representative of France on behalf of the European Union. I should like to focus my statement on several key issues.

First of all, allow me to extend our condolences to the Governments of Afghanistan and of India, as well as to the families of the victims of the heinous and shocking terrorist attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul.

At the Paris Conference, the international community reaffirmed its commitment to work closely under Afghan leadership in support of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, based on the Afghanistan Compact. My country supports the vision and goals outlined in the Strategy. Croatia also welcomes the review of the Afghanistan Compact prepared by the Co-Chairs of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, as well as its substantive conclusions. We subscribe to the observation of the Special Representative that the priorities identified at the Paris Conference are sufficiently covered by the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) as laid out by resolution 1806 (2008). In that respect, we underscore that greater human, administrative and security resources will need to be mobilized in order for UNAMA to fulfil its mandate and achieve the priorities established in Paris. Consequently, Croatia fully supports the Secretary-General's request for additional qualified personnel and financial resources.

Since the launch of the Afghanistan Compact, there has been notable progress in many areas, but daunting challenges remain. We are concerned about the increased insurgency in certain parts of Afghanistan. We especially deplore the fact that the asymmetric attacks on which insurgents heavily rely have resulted in a large number of civilian casualties. The threat to the security and stability of Afghanistan posed by terrorists, criminals and those involved in the illicit drug trade is real and needs to be continuously addressed. We look forward to a more active fight against the production and trafficking of narcotics, and we reiterate the need for the full implementation of resolution 1817 (2008), on international cooperation to strengthen the monitoring of the international trade in chemical precursors.

In addition, my country welcomes the positive developments in the areas of health, education, infrastructure and economic growth, as well as in building stronger Afghan national security forces. However, much more remains to be done, primarily in the areas of the rule of law, law enforcement, Government capacity, development, the private sector and the personal security of all Afghan citizens.

We reiterate the importance of consolidating democracy, including through free, fair and secure elections in 2009 and 2010. Bearing in mind the challenges related to practical preparations for the elections, we support structuring UNAMA's electoral capacity and its interaction with the Afghan Government and the Afghan Independent Electoral Commission.

Regarding support for the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, especially in the agriculture and energy sectors, we believe that the international community has to be ready to provide the necessary resources, in accordance with the priorities set by the strategy. Croatia supports the assessment of the Secretary-General that the support should be guided and promoted by UNAMA and that the new focus will require new resources and expertise, as well as a new internal organizational structure for UNAMA.

Strengthening Afghan Government institutions and improving all public services is another priority that includes support for police reform, strengthening the rule of law and supporting public administration

reform. Those steps are critically important to create a fully functioning State, but also serve as preconditions for garnering the popular support required to help combat the insurgency.

The international community agreed in Paris to deliver its assistance in a more coordinated way and to channel it increasingly through the national budget in order to make it more predictable, transparent and accountable. Croatia fully supports that effort and stands ready to act accordingly.

Regarding humanitarian assistance, in the light of recent developments it is necessary to increase attention to the worsening food situation, and we welcome the launch of an appeal in Kabul today by the Afghan Government and the United Nations. My country further recognizes the essential role of neighbouring countries in providing support to the Government of Afghanistan to achieve stability and prosperity. If I may, I would also like to add my voice and the voice of Croatia to those who have welcomed the intensive and constructive dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Croatia supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General that UNAMA should proceed with another expansion of its field presence with the opening of six new provincial offices over the next 12 months, simultaneously taking into account concerns for the security of staff members as a matter of the highest priority. Croatia believes that such outreach activities are of crucial importance in the implementation of UNAMA's mandate. We hope that the new plan for the United Nations country team will significantly contribute to a more coherent and effective response by the United Nations in Afghanistan in 2008, while respecting Afghan ownership.

In conclusion, we believe that with a true partnership between Afghanistan and the international community under Afghan leadership, based on mutual trust and obligations, we will achieve our common goals. We are determined to play our part in the rebuilding of a democratic, peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Viet Nam.

I should like again to thank Under-Secretary-General Holmes and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Eide for their briefings. I should also like to thank the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and Pakistan for their participation in the Council's debate today.

The security overview of the special report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/434) suggests that, despite the relentless efforts of the Afghan people and the international community, serious challenges to peace and stabilization in Afghanistan remain. We strongly condemn the terrorist attack in Kabul on 7 July 2008 that killed over 40 people. We share the widespread concern over the increased level and complexity of insurgent and terrorist activities in Afghanistan in recent months, which have claimed a number of civilian casualties, as detailed in the report.

Together with terrorism, widespread drug trafficking, natural disasters and food insecurity continue to pose a serious obstacle to post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan and the improvement of the living conditions of the Afghan people. Against that background, we commend the endeavours of the Afghan Government to overcome the various difficulties in keeping its national peace and development on track, especially with the launch of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

We would like to reiterate our support for the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy under Afghan leadership and through an efficient partnership with the international community. In that context, we welcome the outcome of the Paris Conference on 12 June 2008, whereby international donors pledged around $20 billion for Afghanistan. That record figure, along with the large number of stakeholders present at the Paris Conference, provide further evidence of the international community's continued commitment to the security, development and prosperity of Afghanistan. We are convinced that such international donor conferences are very helpful to post-conflict countries, such as Afghanistan.

As regards the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), we appreciate the work done by Mr. Kai Eide and his staff within a short time to propose prioritized actions to fulfil the Mission's mandate. We take note of the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/434) on a greater coordinating role for UNAMA, which would require further personnel and resources. We agree that

UNAMA will have a key role to play in promoting and coordinating international assistance to Afghanistan in the construction of institutions and capacity-building, especially in implementing the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, which covers a broad range of issues from security to economic and social development. We consider that to be a very important task for UNAMA because it will help to improve the living conditions of the Afghan people, thereby addressing the root causes of violence and conflict in Afghanistan.

Current community-based problems in Afghanistan require a comprehensive solution, including not only military and security but also political, development and economic activities. We therefore welcome a comprehensive approach to those challenges and support the Afghan Government and people in taking the leading role in the process. UNAMA should work closely with the Afghan Government in carrying out the existing programme to ensure respect for Afghan ownership in the country's development process.

In that connection, we welcome UNAMA's plan to provide integrated support to the Afghan authorities in the coming electoral process, as requested by President Hâmid Karzai. We also welcome the commitment of international donors at the Paris Conference to improve aid effectiveness and ensure that the benefits of development become tangible for all Afghans.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Viet Nam's consistent support for the promotion of peace, stability and development in Afghanistan. We are willing to work with the Government of Afghanistan on further assistance to the country in some specific areas in which Viet Nam has an advantage, such as agriculture, education and health care.

Finally, we wish the Government and the people of Afghanistan success in the newly launched National Development Strategy, which is an important stage on the path to development and prosperity in Afghanistan.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. McNee (Canada): We are honoured to have the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and Pakistan participate in today's debate.

Canada thanks the Secretary-General for his thoughtful report (S/2008/434) on the situation in Afghanistan, and we express our appreciation to Mr. Eide and to Under-Secretary-General Holmes for their informative briefings earlier today. The report of the Secretary-General presents a frank picture of the situation, but also outlines a vision for the way ahead.

Canada extends its deepest condolences to the Governments and peoples of Afghanistan and India on the loss of their citizens in recent days. The horrific attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul is a reminder that our work is far from done and that the coming year will be a critical one. The efforts of both the Afghan Government and the international community need to be more focused, more decisive, more effective and more coherent as we move forward.

In that regard, Canada wishes to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the vigour, focus and leadership he has brought to the Mission. In the process, he has built a strong relationship with the Government of Afghanistan and with the entire international community.

We also share the Secretary-General's positive assessment of the Paris Conference. We congratulate him and the Governments of France and Afghanistan for establishing the terms of a strengthened partnership between the Afghan Government and the international community.

Canada remains firmly committed to working closely with the Afghan Government, the Afghan people, the United Nations system, NATO, our partners in the International Security Assistance Force and the wider international community to help establish a stable, peaceful future in Afghanistan.

Canada welcomes the successful launching of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. As the Secretary-General's report rightly points out, international resources must be aligned with the priorities identified and agreed to in the Strategy. Canada is doing its part to ensure that alignment.

At the Paris Conference, Canada was pleased to announce the pledge of an additional $600 million for the development and reconstruction of Afghanistan, bringing our overall pledged assistance over a 10-year period to $1.9 billion. Canada remains one of the leading donors to Afghanistan. Much of that assistance

will support the implementation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy over the coming years.

In addition, we have sharpened the focus of our efforts in order to be even more effective in Afghanistan, and specifically in Kandahar province. To that end, the Canadian Government recently announced six priorities upon which our training, assistance and diplomacy will focus. We can assure the Council that those priorities are firmly in line with those outlined by the Afghan Government in the National Development Strategy and with those highlighted in the Secretary-General's report. They include support for the Afghan national security forces, building Afghan capacity to help deliver basic services, continued humanitarian assistance, support for Afghan-led political reconciliation, helping to build key national institutions, and border security.

With that last priority in mind, we welcome the Special Representative's recent visits in the region and encourage such regular consultations as a key step towards building the strong and productive dialogue that is required.

Yet our collective efforts are also at risk from within. For that reason, Canada shares the Secretary-General's concern regarding the devastating impact that corruption is having on the average Afghan and on the international community's development and security efforts. In addition, we share the Secretary-General's assessment that free, fair and secure elections in 2009 and 2010 represent crucial steps in the consolidation of democracy for all Afghans. With that in mind, Canada will lend its full support to Afghan authorities and to the United Nations as they work to plan and administer upcoming elections across the country.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada strongly concurs with the Secretary-General that for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), is to be able to properly deliver on its enhanced mandate, it must be allocated greater resources. We expect the full support of the Secretariat in empowering the Special Representative to manage the complex, ambitious and demanding mandate set out for him by Member States.

In that evolving context, UNAMA must strengthen its offices. Vacant positions must be staffed, while new ones continue to be created. To that end, we are confident that the risk allowance increase that was recently approved by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions will make a real difference.

Canada also welcomes the Secretary-General's resolve to expand UNAMA's presence throughout the country. We look forward to a more visible United Nations presence in Kandahar Province, for instance. Such a presence would send a strong stabilizing signal in that troubled region of Afghanistan.

Canada remains committed to helping Afghanistan build a stable and democratic future. Success in Afghanistan requires a very high degree of coherence and cooperation. In that regard, the United Nations has a critical role to play, and UNAMA can count on Canada's full support in that context. At the same time, Canada has high expectations that UNAMA will deliver on its mandate and be fully accountable for its actions to the Security Council.

Finally, UNAMA's leadership must ensure that our efforts shall lead to the assumption of responsibility by Afghans for their own security, governance and development across Afghanistan. That is what we are all striving for, after all.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Hill (Australia): Thank you, Sir, for the chance to participate in this debate. In view of the time, I shall abbreviate my circulated statement.

Australia believes that the Paris Conference delivered good outcomes that will contribute to a more comprehensive approach and complement the political/military plan agreed to by International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) partners at the NATO summit in Bucharest in April. In endorsing the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, the Conference sent a strong message of the international community's continued commitment to Afghanistan's long-term development and to providing the resources to implement the Strategy's key priorities. Importantly, in our view, the Conference clearly underlined the importance of Afghan leadership and, ultimately, ownership of efforts to address the key challenges facing Afghanistan — security, lack of institutional capacity, corruption and narcotics. It also critically reaffirmed a central role for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and the

United Nations more broadly, in the coordination and implementation of reconstruction and development assistance activity in Afghanistan.

Australia strongly supports UNAMA and the recent decisions of the Council to reconfirm and extend the Mission's mandate. We believe that continued progress in Afghanistan depends vitally on strengthened and expanded United Nations engagement.

We welcome the announcement by the Secretary-General of his intention to expand the reach of UNAMA through the establishment of new provincial offices, including in Uruzgan, where Australian personnel are deployed. In our view, that approach sends a clear signal of the United Nation's commitment to providing more direct humanitarian and development assistance through programmes and outreach at the community level, where help is most needed.

Australia also welcomes and supports the priorities identified for UNAMA in the Secretary-General's report. We recognize that Afghanistan's challenges are of an enormous scale and that civilian efforts are best focused on those sectors that can underpin and help to drive Afghanistan's longer-term economic and social development and, through that, help to combat the insurgency.

We believe that strengthening Afghanistan's democratic processes, particularly by ensuring credible elections, should be a key priority for the international mission and the Afghan Government. We also strongly support United Nations focus on building Afghan institutional capacity to provide basic services, such as water, roads and power; training to improve public administration and local governance; and initiatives to reduce Afghan economic dependence on narcotics. Those are priority areas where the United Nations, working with other international donors, can and should make a difference.

At the same time, we need to be realistic, given that, without basic security, meaningful development activity and sustained progress on the ground will not be possible. ISAF partners and the Afghan Government have an important responsibility to help establish the conditions to support the delivery of United Nations and civilian programmes.

Australia is firmly committed to doing its part. We are making a major contribution to international military efforts in Afghanistan through the deployment of around 1,000 Australian Defence Force personnel, largely to Uruzgan Province. At the Paris Conference, our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Smith, announced that Australia would provide $250 million over three years to support the implementation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, bringing Australia's total commitment in aid and reconstruction in Afghanistan to $600 million since 2001. We will increase our support for the Afghan National Police and counter-narcotics initiatives through a substantial increase to the number of Australian Federal Police officers deployed to Afghanistan.

In conclusion, the challenges facing Afghanistan are enormous, but we are making progress. It is clear that our collective efforts require significant resources and better integration — a fact reflected in both the Bucharest and the Paris outcomes.

We firmly believe that the United Nations has a crucial role to play in marshalling and coordinating civilian resources, and we look forward to working with the Special Representative and his UNAMA team to help bring peace and stability to Afghanistan.

The President: I call on the representative of New Zealand.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): I thank the Secretary-General for his special report on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Special Representative Eide and Under-Secretary-General Holmes for their briefings today, and Foreign Minister Spantâ for his presentation.

New Zealand is pleased with the outcomes of the Paris Conference, especially the emphasis on the expanded role of the Secretary-General's Special Representative and UNAMA in leading the coordination of international efforts and in coordinating the policies and activities of the Afghan Government and the international community. We welcome pledges made in Paris totalling $20 billion, including from New Zealand; the launch of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy; and the Paris Declaration.

New Zealand supports all the Secretary-General's recommendations outlined in his report to strengthen UNAMA. It is important that UNAMA be able more

effectively to coordinate international assistance alongside the Afghan Government. We are particularly pleased to see that areas identified in the report as priorities include governance; the protection of human rights; the improvement of civil-military coordination; good offices to support, if so requested by the Afghan Government, the implementation of Afghan-led reconciliation programmes; and outreach efforts by expanding the UNAMA presence throughout the country.

New Zealand joins others in condemning the suicide bombing that killed 41 people in Kabul earlier this week in the vicinity of the Ministry of the Interior and the Indian Embassy. We are concerned about the evolving security situation across Afghanistan, and we agree with the Special Representative's recommendation, endorsed by the Secretary-General, that much greater resources will need to be devoted to security if UNAMA is to fulfil its mandate and achieve the Paris priorities.

We urge the international community to fulfil its commitments made at the Paris Conference to help ensure that the important recommendations of the Secretary-General can be implemented so that we can all work effectively with the Government of Afghanistan towards a positive future for Afghanistan.

The President: I call on the representative of India.

Mr. Sen (India): Let me begin by expressing my delegation's pleasure, Sir, at seeing your delegation assume the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also express India's appreciation to you for scheduling today's debate on this important topic.

Let me also welcome the presence of Mr. Rangin Spantâ, Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, and Mr. Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Foreign Minister of Pakistan, who just left the Chamber, and thank them for their statements and their expressions of concern and sympathy over the terrorist attack on our embassy in Kabul, their clear condemnation of which has been echoed by members of this Council today.

Last but not least, I also thank Special Representative Kai Eide and Under-Secretary-General John Holmes for their briefings today.

I am distressed to have to begin my statement by acknowledging with gratitude the condolences of this Council over the barbaric attack upon our embassy in Kabul two days ago. Not only were scores of innocent Afghan lives lost; we also lost four Indian colleagues working with a fraternal people in their hour of need. Those who perpetrated that act and those who train and protect terrorists and enable them to commit horrific acts of violence are no better than the basest criminals.

It is for that reason that security within Afghanistan and coordinated efforts to stop terrorists from operating with impunity beyond Afghanistan's borders must be the paramount priority of our collective efforts in Afghanistan. To those who commit such acts and to those responsible for the greater villainy of sheltering and enabling terrorists, our response remains firm and unyielding. As our Prime Minister has said, "We have lost Indians who were helping their Afghan brothers rebuild their lives and country. That endeavour must continue with renewed commitment". While mourning their loss, we believe that we can best honour our fallen colleagues by redoubling our commitment to working with Afghanistan to secure stability and development in that country and, consequently, in the region.

Our discussion today takes place in the context of the recently-convened Paris Conference in Support of Afghanistan. Having participated in the Conference at the political level, India welcomes its outcome and the proposed presidential statement of this Council in support of that outcome. We share the sense in this Chamber of the need for the international community to provide not just the resources — important as they are — but also the much-needed political space to enable the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to exercise its mandate to assist the national Government in coordinating international assistance for Afghanistan.

In that context, I should also underline that, as a regional partner and a country with strong historic and cultural links with Afghanistan, India sees merit in the approach adopted by Special Representative Eide, as reflected in the report before us. The mandate provided to UNAMA by this Council through resolution 1806 (2008) provides ample scope for the United Nations to play a central role in the international community. Streamlining our collective efforts through UNAMA in support of the newly adopted Afghanistan National Development Strategy and through the national budget will underscore the fact that international assistance is in line with priorities set by Afghanistan.

What is crucial, however, is that such coordination be effected in a manner that is coherent and focused. We need to avoid the temptation of trying to resolve all of Afghanistan's problems at once, just as we need to avoid the pitfalls of setting unrealistic benchmarks and objectives that are desirable for us, but less so for the very people we seek to help. While the international community collectively repeats commitments underscoring the importance of such a demand-driven approach, greater efforts are required on the ground to meet such commitments. Without an Afghan-led process of discussing and finalizing the prioritization of tasks, our collective efforts run the very real risk of losing legitimacy.

Events on the ground make it clear that any listing of challenges before the Afghan people must begin with security. We cannot afford to slacken our resolve or our efforts in combating the forces of terrorism, extremism and crime wherever and in whatever forms those groups may take. Most importantly, that must be a collective effort; we cannot succeed if we send mixed signals through bargains for temporary and local peace while the rest of us contend with the consequences of such deals.

The rising trend of attacks, abductions and suicide bombings is also a sign that terrorist groups are emboldened by the displays of wavering confidence that such bargains imply, and therefore hope to weaken our collective resolve. We cannot have partial compromises with such forces and yet nurture hopes of prevailing in Afghanistan. We remain convinced that there needs to be a much closer alignment between the consistent application of force wherever terrorist groups are present and the political objectives of our efforts in Afghanistan, in which UNAMA must play an important role.

Results cannot be achieved on the ground without adequate attention to both security and development components. However, if we are to achieve sustainable success over the long term on both fronts, the common denominator is capacity-building. Thus far, our collective effort on that vital aspect has been episodic and inadequate. We need to do better expeditiously. The report identifies some of the key areas in which such capacity-building efforts are vital, and we concur in particular with the notion that strengthening the National Police and public administration has to be taken up as a priority. Limited results in that regard will be reflected by an equally paltry list for us to show for our efforts in any of the benchmarks for progress that we may have set ourselves, be they in the field of counter-narcotics or the efficient utilization of budgetary resources. It is for that reason that India has made capacity-building a priority element in all our efforts in Afghanistan, even in the infrastructure projects we are executing there, all of which include strong capacity-building components in them.

To achieve those and other core objectives in Afghanistan, we have collectively agreed to empower the United Nations, through its Assistance Mission, to facilitate greater coherence amongst us and between us and our hosts. However, we cannot achieve results unless we enable UNAMA to do its job by providing it the material and human resources to execute its mandate in Afghanistan. Not only does the United Nations need these resources on an exceptional basis for Afghanistan, it needs them exceptionally soon. The time for us to empower UNAMA is now.

India will remain fully committed to implementing the interrelated security, political and development challenges facing Afghanistan. We remain unflinching in our commitment to reconstruction, development and capacity-building in Afghanistan. As one of Afghanistan's largest development partners, India remains willing to support UNAMA in improving donor cohesion in support of Afghan-defined priorities.

In conclusion, let me also reiterate our abiding belief in and commitment to our shared objective: assisting Afghanistan to complete its reemergence as a modern democratic country, confident in its unique culture and pluralistic identity, at peace with itself and secure in its neighbourhood, firmly on the path to sustainable economic development and liberated from the burdens of the recent history of strife and privation. It is for this reason that we fully endorse the effort to empower the United Nations to bring us together in a more coherent partnership to enable Afghanistan to secure the better future that lies within its reach.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I thank Mr. Kai Eide and Mr. John Holmes for their dedicated work and for today's briefings on the situation in Afghanistan. I also welcome the presence here today of Mr. Spantâ, Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, and of Mr. Qureshi, Foreign Minister of Pakistan.

At the outset, I must express our strong concern about the security situation in the country. Japan strongly condemns the suicide attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul on Monday. Such cowardly acts of terrorism cannot by any means be justified. On behalf of the Government and the people of Japan, I would like to extend our deepest condolences and sympathy to the victims, the bereaved families and the peoples and the Governments of Afghanistan and India.

When we last met in this Chamber to discuss the situation in Afghanistan in March (see S/PV.5851), all speakers expressed their commitment to assisting Afghanistan in its efforts to rebuild the country. Those commitments are reflected in Security Council resolution 1806 (2008), which extended and sharpened the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Since then, the strong commitment of the international community has been confirmed on various occasions, including at the Bucharest meeting and the Paris Conference. Most recently, the leaders of the Group of Eight (G-8) yesterday renewed their commitment to support Afghanistan at the G-8 Hokkaido Toyako summit. Prior to that, the G-8 Foreign Ministers reaffirmed the steadfast and long-term commitment of G-8 members by issuing a standalone statement on Afghanistan at their meeting in Kyoto last week. That statement presented a comprehensive strategy of the G-8 countries to assist Afghanistan in achieving stability and reconstruction.

On those occasions, it has always been stressed that effective coordination among Governments and organizations is essential. We look to UNAMA and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan to play an even greater role in coordinating international efforts in partnership with the Government of Afghanistan. It is for that reason that the Security Council strengthened UNAMA's mandate in March. Japan highly appreciates the strenuous work carried out by Mr. Eide since assuming his post in this difficult but vital task. It is hard to coordinate many actors unless they are willing to be coordinated. For their part, the G-8 leaders renewed their commitment to supporting UNAMA and Mr. Eide in their role as overall coordinator of the efforts of the international community.

As regards the Secretary-General's report before the Council today (S/2008/434), Japan supports its observation that UNAMA should be strengthened, given the importance of the mission more effectively discharging the duties entrusted to it. We look forward to discussing in due course the details as to how to implement those observations.

As we are set to discuss development challenges facing Afghanistan, the recent incident underscores the grim picture related to the security situation. The international community and the Government of Afghanistan together must make a great effort to improve the situation. Japan values the commitment of ISAF troop-contributing countries, renewed at the Bucharest meeting, as well as that of participants in Operation Enduring Freedom. Japan is continuing its efforts by assisting the maritime component of Operation Enduring Freedom in the Indian Ocean. Security sector reform should remain a central focus. In that regard, Japan continues to lead the ongoing efforts related to the disbandment of illegal and armed groups and will expand its training programme for Afghan police officers. We are prepared to provide additional equipment for the Afghan National Police.

On the reconstruction side, we welcome the successful outcome of the Paris Conference, in terms both of the political commitment demonstrated and of the pledges made to help the country and its National Development Strategy. On that occasion, Japan made an additional pledge of $550 million in order to support the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact and the Development Strategy. With this new additional pledge, our total pledge to Afghanistan has reached $2 billion. Most of our earlier pledges have been fully disbursed. We wish international assistance to be carried out effectively, with better coordination and under the guidance of Special Representative Eide, to bring tangible benefits to the people of Afghanistan. In that connection, we support addressing urgently the dire humanitarian needs that were described by Mr. Holmes today.

I would like to stress, now more than ever, the particular importance of the regional dimension. Cooperation among Afghanistan and its neighbours is essential to create stable conditions for Afghanistan and for the region as a whole. Focusing particularly on the border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan, including the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the G-8 leaders reaffirmed the importance of economic and social development along with counter-terrorism measures in the border region. They expressed their commitment to further strengthening the coordination

of their efforts in the border area in cooperation with the respective countries, international organizations and other donors. Prior to that, Foreign Ministers of the G-8 decided to strengthen assistance and endorsed more than 150 projects in the region being planned or implemented by G-8 members. They also agreed to establish a G-8 coordination arrangement with the support of the Afghan and Pakistani Governments and in support of UNAMA. I sincerely hope that these efforts will contribute to stabilizing the border region and enhancing the security of Afghanistan.

The next important step towards a stable and democratic Afghanistan is to successfully hold elections in 2009 and 2010. Thorough preparation will be the key to success in this undertaking. We are committed to supporting the work of the Afghan Government and of the United Nations in this major step, in response to the specific needs to be identified.

As the international community remains firmly committed to supporting Afghanistan, we should better cooperate and coordinate with the Government. In his visit to Kabul just before the Paris Conference, Japan's Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura stressed to President Karzai and his senior colleagues and Afghan leaders the importance of strengthening their anti-corruption and counter-narcotics efforts and regional cooperation, in order to make maximal use of international support. We very much welcome the commitment reaffirmed by the Government of Afghanistan at the Paris Conference to pursue political and economic reform, including concrete steps to combat corruption. We look forward to such reform efforts bearing fruit and thereby contributing to the stability and development of Afghanistan.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): Although Turkey has already aligned itself with the European Union statement, I still would like to touch upon some issues that deserve particular attention.

The recent Paris Conference marked the renewal of our long-term commitment to Afghanistan while firmly underscoring the priority areas designed to ensure better and safer living standards for our Afghan brothers and sisters. Much has indeed been achieved in Afghanistan to date, yet more remains to be done. And we all know that there is no quick fix for the mostly structural problems stemming from the devastation of the past.

The Secretary-General's latest report (S/2008/434) makes it clear that if the Afghan people are to continue reaping the benefits of achievements, there needs to be a stronger United Nations presence in the country and a closer partnership among the Afghan Government, the United Nations, NATO and the rest of the international community under Afghan ownership and leadership. To enhance the sense of ownership, we also need to make the Afghan people see the positive developments which have already started to improve their daily lives.

The successful implementation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy will pave the way for attaining the goals set out in the Afghanistan Compact. In that arduous task, the international community must be ever more active, resourceful and forthcoming in supporting the efforts of the Afghan Government. We believe the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has an important coordinating role to play in that regard. We fully concur with the Secretary-General's reflections on the priority areas and his recommendations contained in the report. In that context, I would like to place special emphasis on the need to enhance the capabilities of UNAMA. The international community's resolve and commitment should also be fully reflected by structurally reinforcing the mission in a rapid fashion.

The terms "security" and "prosperity" are inseparable and complementary. In the case of Afghanistan, the security situation might easily become a stumbling block in our joint efforts to bring about a bright future there. The recent upsurge in terrorist activities has again shown us that, if not properly checked, those subversive operations have the potential to derail all our achievements in Afghanistan.

There is no doubt that the Afghan security forces should be the ones in the forefront of the efforts to combat terrorism. However, the complexity of the threat necessitates a holistic and coordinated regional approach, as the threat has unfortunately a strong chance of spilling over into the wider region. We strongly believe that our Afghan and Pakistani brothers should further increase their collaboration to curb that scourge.

Turkey's commitment to Afghanistan is a long-standing one. Turkey has already made extensive and concrete contributions to security and economic development in Afghanistan. At the 12 June Paris Conference, the Turkish Government allocated another $100 million for economic development and reconstruction, to be disbursed in the next three years. That doubles our total commitment to $200 million.

Assisting the international efforts to build a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan is one of the high-ranking items on Turkey's foreign policy agenda. We will certainly continue to support Afghanistan in every way we can, through international mechanisms and bilaterally.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): Delegations have been sitting here for more than two hours, so I will try to be very brief, and not speak for longer than 30 minutes. Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month and by thanking the Secretary-General for his latest report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2008/434). I would also like to express our gratitude to Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his hard work and for his commendable vision. It is indeed a pleasure to see the Foreign Ministers of the brotherly countries of Afghanistan — His Excellency Mr. Spantâ — and Pakistan in the Security Council today. I also thank Mr. John Holmes for his briefing to the Council today.

Afghanistan, under the wise leadership of President Karzai, and despite all the daunting challenges facing it, has achieved remarkable accomplishments in the past several years. The launch of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy at the Paris Conference last month, which will function as a road map for the development, security and prosperity of the country, under Afghan leadership, is yet another sign of the fact that the Afghan people and Government are prepared, capable and willing to lead the efforts to rebuild their country. The Paris Conference, which Iran, as in previous conferences on Afghanistan, actively attended at the highest level, also served as another occasion for the international community to display its commitment to, and partnership with, Afghanistan. We have noted that progress continues in several important sectors, including in health services, investment in the natural resources of the country, capacity-building, infrastructure, education and growth in gross domestic product.

Despite those remarkable accomplishments, Afghanistan is indeed still facing certain threats and challenges, particularly those posed by terrorist acts and the production and trafficking of narcotic drugs. Al-Qaida, the Taliban and other criminal and terrorist groups continue their malicious terrorist and criminal acts aimed at undermining the achievements of the Afghan people and Government. We are concerned that, as mentioned in the report at hand, the level of insurgent and terrorist activity in Afghanistan has increased to the extent that May 2008 recorded the highest number of security incidents in the country since the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001. We condemn all acts of terrorism perpetrated in Afghanistan, especially the most recent one that occurred at the Indian embassy in Kabul, and express our condolences to the Governments and peoples of the countries affected and to the families and relatives of the victims.

The deteriorating security situation throughout the country attests to the fact that more serious consideration should be given to full Afghan national ownership of the security of their country and that the independence and integrity of the Afghan national security forces should be strengthened. Those measures, together with increasing home-grown security in the country, are essential to tackling insecurity in Afghanistan.

Another threat that has put the security of Afghanistan, the region and beyond at great risk and that requires more concerted efforts to uproot it, both on the part of Afghanistan and the international community, is the menace of the production and trafficking of narcotics, which has unfortunately increased in recent years. As mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General, countering that serious challenge must remain an ongoing priority. We concur with the Secretary-General that, to be effective, measures to counter the illegal production and trafficking of narcotics should be integrated into wider efforts, such as those related to security, governance, rule of law, economic and social development and rural development. Iran has fought, and continues to fight, the menace of drug trafficking that originates from

Afghanistan with the utmost seriousness — and almost single-handedly.

The stability, security and prosperity of Afghanistan are of high importance to Iran and are vital for our own security and development as an immediate neighbour. We have therefore extended our sincere and full cooperation and assistance to the Afghan Government. The Islamic Republic of Iran has helped the Afghan people and Government to rebuild their country by contributing to the construction of various infrastructure projects. We are happy that many Afghan citizens feel the results of that sincere assistance in their day-to-day lives. We have also hosted millions of our brother Afghan refugees — and illegal immigrants as well — in recent decades and are working with the Afghan Government for their timely and dignified return.

I wish to conclude by reiterating our support for the central and essential role that the United Nations plays in Afghanistan. We support the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to promote regional cooperation, which in the report at hand has been rightly identified as a priority for the activities of UNAMA. UNAMA and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General can count on our support in their endeavours to help Afghanistan.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Majoor (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing the Netherlands to take the floor in this debate. The Netherlands fully supports the statement made earlier by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union. Because of our substantial contributions, both military and in the field of development, we would like to make a few additional remarks.

We can look back on a successful Paris Conference in Support of Afghanistan, which saw frank discussions on priority issues and nearly $21 billion pledged. We now have to speed up work on our mutual obligations. I share the assessment of Special Representative Eide.

The international community has shown a long-term commitment to Afghanistan and has agreed to coordinate more closely and to work through Afghan structures as much as possible. With our collective support, the Afghan Government will have to take the lead in tackling the most urgent issues. I should like to mention five of those.

First, governance at the provincial and local levels must be a high priority. More qualified people are needed, especially at the local level. Secondly, justice and human rights are equally important. Substantial progress is needed to end the culture of impunity and corruption.

Furthermore, reconciliation is a key element of Afghanistan's long-term sustainability. The Afghan Government should reach out to those groups and communities that disagree with the extremist ideology of the Taliban. Another core issue is the upcoming elections. The Afghan Government should make every effort to ensure that the elections will be a success and that every Afghan, woman or man, can vote. Finally, Afghan leadership is urgently needed to tackle narcotics. In that respect, we wish to stress the importance of interdiction and of social, economic and rural development as prerequisites for a poppy-free society.

On our part, we will continue to support Afghanistan and its people. Over the period 2009-2011, we will contribute €775 million in combined military assistance and development cooperation, depending on further progress in the areas I have just mentioned.

Let me now turn briefly to relations between Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries, especially Pakistan. We very much welcome the Foreign Ministers' participation in this important debate. Good relations and strengthened cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan are essential elements in tackling the insurgency in the border region. In that respect, I would like to encourage the Government of Pakistan, as the Minister mentioned in his contribution to this discussion, to follow an integrated approach in the border region. Besides military means, socio-economic development and a reconciliation process for all those who do not support terrorism and extremism are needed.

Finally, let me say a few words about the United Nations. For many of the priorities I have mentioned, we believe that a strong United Nations footprint in Afghanistan is essential. We are particularly appreciative of the work of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kai Eide and all United Nations staff in Afghanistan. We warmly welcome the announcement made last week of plans to open an

office of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in Uruzgan. We strongly believe that the physical presence of UNAMA in Uruzgan will be a catalyst for the deployment there of other members of the United Nations Family and non-governmental organizations. We stand ready to facilitate that process where needed.

For UNAMA to be able to put its Security Council mandate into practice, we agree with the observation of the Secretary-General in his report (S/2008/434) that it is now a matter of urgency that UNAMA be provided with the necessary means and staff. We should not allow bureaucratic obstacles to delay that. In that respect, we call not only on the United Nations family but on all of us to support UNAMA in establishing a more effective framework with the required funds and trained staff.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mrs. Juul (Norway): Let me at the outset express my condolences to the people and Governments of Afghanistan and India for their tragic loss that resulted from the heinous terrorist attack at the Indian embassy in Kabul last Monday. The attack was a reminder that, even though formidable efforts have been made to stabilize and rebuild Afghanistan, more remains be done.

Norway welcomes the Secretary-General's report (S/2008/434) on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the outcome of the Paris Conference on 12 June and the way forward. We also welcome the statements just made by Special Representative Kai Eide and Under-Secretary-General John Holmes. We recognize the achievements to date, but we also recognize that there are still many challenges ahead in ensuring stability and sustainable development in Afghanistan.

The Paris Conference demonstrated that the international community is united in its long-term commitment to the Afghan people. The Paris Conference also made it clear that more needs to be done to ensure that the benefits of development reach all Afghans in all areas of Afghanistan. We, the Government of Afghanistan and the international community need to increase our joint efforts. We need to base our efforts on the priorities of the Government of Afghanistan, in close coordination with UNAMA under the strengthened leadership of Special Representative Kai Eide. Let me assure the Security Council that Norway is committed to doing its part.

The recent meeting of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board in Kabul on 6 July outlined the priority areas for the years to come based on the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. Norway fully supports those priorities in supporting the upcoming elections, good governance and the rule of law, increased aid effectiveness, institution-building and strengthening humanitarian access to vulnerable populations. In particular, I would like to underscore that the Government of Afghanistan, international donors and the United Nations should increase their efforts to meet the urgent humanitarian needs caused by the combined forces of conflict, drought and soaring food and energy prices.

The Paris Conference also served to reaffirm our support for the strengthened role of UNAMA in leading and coordinating the international civilian effort. Our expressions of support should be accompanied by concrete action in the three following areas.

First, we must commit ourselves to working in a more coordinated way and to using our resources in a more effective manner, guided by UNAMA and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Secondly, we must ensure better coordination of the different parts of the United Nations system and strengthen its operative programmes in Afghanistan. Thirdly, we must ensure that UNAMA is provided with the necessary resources in terms of personnel and security to fulfil its responsibilities with regard to its mandate. We endorse the recommendation of the Secretary-General to expand UNAMA's presence in the field and support the call for increased resources to that end.

The Paris Declaration is an expression of the partnership between the international community and the Government of Afghanistan. The Declaration emphasizes the importance of holding fair, free and secure elections in 2009 and 2010. The upcoming elections are critical to stabilizing the fragile Afghan democracy. Norway is determined to support all aspects of the electoral process — politically, practically and financially. Ensuring the participation of women in the elections is of particular importance. I am pleased to announce that Norway has pledged to support the voter registration process with a total of $3 million for 2008.

Norway remains committed to the development of Afghanistan. The concentration and prioritizing of development assistance will guide our efforts. As international financial assistance continues to increase, the Government of Afghanistan needs to demonstrate good governance and adequate delivery of services to its people. We expect the Government of Afghanistan to dismantle the system of corruption. In that regard, we welcome the anti-corruption law enacted recently by the Afghan parliament and look forward to it being implemented swiftly and effectively. We also expect the Government of Afghanistan to commit itself to the protection and promotion of human rights. By doing that, we are building a true and lasting partnership.

The President: As there are no further speakers inscribed on my list, I now give the floor to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kai Eide to respond to the comments made in this debate.

Mr. Eide: I do not think that there have been any questions directed to me, but may I perhaps make a few comments.

First of all, I am struck at seeing how in agreement the Council is with regard to the essentials and the priorities set by the Paris Conference, including support for the Afghan Government and all it is doing through the Development Strategy that has now been launched.

Secondly, may I say that the support the Council provides for the United Nations Mission is more than encouraging. It warms me, and certainly it will warm the Mission to know that here in New York there is such broad support, and that the Council trusts us in the many tasks that we have in front of us.

The coordination task is going to be tremendous, and success depends, of course, on countries being willing to be coordinated. But I must say I sense around this table and around other tables that there is a different attitude on this issue today "there is a greater readiness to be coordinated. It is a considerable agenda. I can promise the Council that we will do our best, and I am pleased to see that it is ready to provide resources.

May I also say one thing at the very end: that we will do this under Afghan leadership, under the leadership of the Afghan Government — and I am pleased to have the Foreign Minister next to me — and that we will do it in the service of the Afghan people, who need it so much.

The President: I now give the floor to Under-Secretary-General John Holmes.

Mr. Holmes: I shall be very brief. I think understandably, most delegations focused their remarks on the major political and security challenges in Afghanistan and less so on the humanitarian situation, but I am grateful to those delegations that referred to the need to increase the humanitarian assistance we can give to the people of Afghanistan and to the need to strengthen our efforts with the Government of Afghanistan to reinforce our humanitarian capacity.

I am grateful for that support. Let me assure the Council that we will be doing our best for our part, that is as the international humanitarian community, to strengthen that capacity and to try to respond better to these humanitarian needs, which are unfortunately increasing at this time.

The President: The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda.

May I take this opportunity to thank the Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan and Pakistan for their participation in this debate.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.